VOLUME E: The Victorian Age



THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY ENGLISH LITERATURE

THE VICTORIAN AGE

VOLUME E

ELEVENTH EDITION

The Victorian Age 1830–1901



The Secret of England's Greatness (Victoria Presenting a Bible in the Audience Chamber at Windsor) (detail), Thomas Barker Jones, ca. 1863. For more information about this painting, see p. 29, below.

1832: First Reform Act

1834–38: Abolition of slavery

1837: Victoria becomes queen

1845–48: Great Famine

1846: Corn Laws repealed

1853–56: Crimean War

1857: Indian Uprising

1859: Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* published

1877: Queen Victoria proclaimed empress of India

1901: Death of Victoria

PROLOGUE: SARAH FORBES BONETTA, EMINENT VICTORIAN

My dearest Mama,

I have been in a state of mental misery & indecision ever since your 2nd letter arrived yesterday. I should have sat down to write to you the moment it arrived, but remembered that you would have said "take time to consider." I shall now tell you truly what my thoughts & feelings are, with regard to Mr. Davies. . . . You remember perhaps when he proposed a year ago, I said I could never either love or marry him, and I thought it impossible for us to make each other happy. . . . I know that the generality of people would say he is rich & your marrying him would at once make you independent, and I say "Am I to barter my peace of mind for money?" No—never!

Yours affectionately,
Etta

This letter tells a story familiar from Victorian literature. A young woman is courted by an older man who offers her a home and financial stability. Her family wishes for the match, but the woman herself holds out hope for a marriage for love. This letter was not written by a fictional heroine, however; instead, it is the work of a woman named Sarah Forbes Bonetta who came to England from West Africa in 1850 as a "diplomatic gift" from King Gezo to Captain Frederick Forbes. Forbes had been sent to Dahomey (now Benin) to persuade the king to turn from the slave trade to palm oil production. The mission was a failure: the king had no interest in relinquishing his nation's position as the predominant source of enslaved people in the region. Further, as historian David Olusoga describes, the fact that the British had so recently "dominate[d] the slave trade" (slavery was only fully abolished in 1838) "added a

complicating tone of hypocrisy" to British demands for reform. The gift of an enslaved child—Sarah—only underscored this embarrassing state of affairs. Despite these complexities, when Forbes brought Bonetta back to England, the Queen "was so taken with the young child that she paid for her education and became her godmother." The portrait that appears on the cover of this volume was taken on the day of her wedding to the man she describes in her letter; despite her initial hesitation, it appears that prudence won out. The ceremony caused quite a sensation. "Months afterwards," Olusoga writes, "reports of the event were still appearing in the colonial press." Sarah and her husband had three children, the eldest of whom was named Victoria; the Queen was her godmother. Sarah died in 1880. Until recently, most of her descendants had no idea they were related to a friend of Queen Victoria.

Bonetta's story is extraordinary. Yet many British writers had extraordinary stories, and many originated in places other than the British Isles. By the end of the nineteenth century, over a quarter of the world's landmass, and slightly less than a quarter of its population, was governed by Great Britain. India, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the West Indies, the Middle East, East Asia: very few places remained wholly untouched by British imperial aggression. And that aggression took cultural as well as military and economic forms. British governance was almost always conducted in English, and the education and sometimes the conversion of Indigenous populations were often used to justify foreign incursions. As a result, over the course of the nineteenth century, British literature—that is, literature in English that was influenced by British literary texts and traditions—began to be written all over the world. In her status as both an insider and an outsider to Victorian literary culture, Bonetta has much in common with several of the writers who are new to this volume: Mary Seacole, the Jamaican-born daughter of a Scottish lieutenant in the British army and a Jamaican mother, who worked tirelessly as a nurse and businesswoman during the Crimean War; or Olive Schreiner, the South African child of a German father and an English mother, who was a vocal opponent of British imperial aggression as well as an advocate for women's

rights; or Toru Dutt, whose poetry brings together the Indian stories on which she was raised with the Romantic poetry which she read as a child in a highly educated Bengali family; or Rabindranath Tagore, Bengali poet, fiction writer, painter, activist—and the only Indian to date to win the Nobel Prize for Literature—who was a stalwart advocate of Indian independence, briefly studied law at University College London, and was influenced by English, Irish, and Scottish folk tunes; or Tekahionwake (also known as E. Pauline Johnson), the daughter of a Mohawk father and an English mother, who grew up in Canada writing patriotic poetry celebrating Queen Victoria alongside lamentations for the fate of her people. These writers came from very different ethnic and religious traditions and grew up in very different parts of the world. Yet even as they were Jamaican, African, Indian, or Mohawk, they can also be regarded as "Victorian writers" both in the sense that they lived in the mid- to late nineteenth century as subjects of the British Crown, and in the sense that they all helped shape—even as they were partially shaped by—British literature.



Marriage Portrait, 1862. Part of what is so striking about this wedding photograph of Sarah Forbes Bonetta with her husband, Captain James Pinson Labulo Davies, is its ordinariness: the poses of the two figures, their dress, and the furniture in the room are all standard for a wealthy British couple of the time. Yet, the fact that both these figures are Black at a moment when slavery was still a living memory in Great Britain, makes the image extraordinary. According to the article in *The Times* that covered their wedding, Queen Victoria, Bonetta's godmother, "provided the whole of the [wedding] outfit." The photographer, Camille Silvy, was the photographer for many members of the royal family.

In many accounts of Victorian literature, imperial ambitions seem to exist in a realm of geopolitics, international finance, and

government policy far afield from mid- to late nineteenth century literature's concern with the ordinary thoughts and feelings of ordinary Britons. Romantic love, the experiences of childhood, the pleasures of the natural world, the chronicling of the everyday: these staples of the novel and the poetry of the period seem to keep the horizon very close. Even prose writers' questions about morality, value, and the dangers of a rapidly industrializing society can seem attached only to a very limited and local understanding of Britishness. It is unlikely the world ever seemed so narrow to Victorian writers themselves. Thomas Carlyle, Alfred Tennyson, Christina Rossetti, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and John Stuart Mill are all authors who have long been featured in anthologies, yet their writings on race and empire have not always been central to the literary-historical narrative of which they are a part. This omission has had the effect of seeming to confirm John Robert Seeley's frequently quoted 1883 claim that the British "seem, as it were, to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind." Yet British writers in Great Britain were both aware of, and concerned about, what was happening in the colonies. Meanwhile, the writing coming out of the colonies has sometimes been set aside as if connected only to its country of origin and not to the colonial culture that was shaping and being shaped by it.

Decisions about which works to include in anthologies, and which to omit, are no accident, but instead a product of the Victorian period—as is the notion of literary study as we know it today. Literary historian Gauri Viswanathan has shown that the English literary curriculum was originally designed as a product for export, the goal of which was "to help colonial subjects lose their foreignness." Thus, well before this curriculum was taught in Great Britain, it was being employed in India in order to create a class of citizens who, in Thomas Babington Macaulay's words from 1835, were "Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect." "English literature," Viswanathan concludes, "was made into an academic discipline in an effort to respond to Macaulay's call." From this perspective, it is less surprising that not only were non-White or non-English voices largely excised from the canon, but also

that some of the work engaged with questions of empire by writers who have long been seen as central to the period has tended to be "forgotten."

THE "VICTORIAN AGE"

The "Victorian Age" takes its name from Queen Victoria, who served as an important figurehead during the sixty-three years of her rule. Her symbolic role was especially significant for members of the middle class who (however ironically) saw the most powerful woman in the world as sharing their core values. Victoria herself encouraged her subjects to identify her with the qualities most often associated with the period in which she lived: earnestness, moral responsibility, domestic propriety. As a young wife, the mother of nine children, and the black-garbed Widow of Windsor in the forty years after her husband's death in 1861, Victoria represented the domestic fidelities many of her citizens embraced. After her death Henry James wrote, "I mourn the safe and motherly old middle-class queen, who held the nation warm under the fold of her big, hideous Scotch-plaid shawl." Changes in the reproduction of visual images aided in making her an icon. She is the first British monarch of whom we have photographs. These pictures, and the ease and cheapness with which they were reproduced, facilitated her representing her country's sense of itself during her reign.



Queen Victoria and Child, 1844. This, believed to be the earliest photograph of Queen Victoria, shows her with her daughter Victoria, the Princess Royal.

However central to the way we think about (and name) the "Victorian Age," Victoria's ascension to the throne in 1837 is only one of several events that can be understood to inaugurate the period considered in this volume. The 1832 Reform Act, for example, seemed to many to presage a new, more democratic, age. Before the Reform Act, only about two hundred thousand people in the

United Kingdom, nearly all of whom were male landowners, were empowered to vote. The Act extended the franchise to all males owning property worth £10 or more in annual rent in England and Wales; a similar Scottish Reform Act also passed in 1832. In effect, the voting public thereafter included lower-middle-class men, although not working-class men, women of any class, or colonized people living in the countries under British rule. Despite its limitations, the Reform Act constituted an important shift in the way political representation was conceived. It also reformed an electoral system in which vast new industrial districts had previously no representation in Parliament while depopulated rural communities dutifully elected the nominees of the local squire. The limitations of the Reform Act were recognized even before it was passed, but it did signal the possibility of democratic reform and the reconfiguration of political power along new, more inclusive, lines.

Another important event that is sometimes understood as the inception of the Victorian period is the final abolition of slavery in 1838. Although the slave trade was ended in 1807, enslaved people continued to be compelled to labor on the highly profitable sugar plantations of the West Indies until the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act began the slow move toward freedom. Due to pressure from plantation owners, the Act was followed by a four-year-long pause during which enslaved people continued to be held as "apprentices." Enslavers were paid £20m to compensate them for their loss of "property"; enslaved people received no compensation whatsoever. Nevertheless, the fact of abolition was the source of enormous pride during a period in which the southern states of the United States, Brazil, West Africa, and many other parts of the world persisted in promoting slavery and the slave trade. As John Stuart Mill wrote, the abolitionist cause "triumphed because it was the cause of justice; and, in the estimation of the great majority of its supporters, of religion. Its originators and leaders were persons of a stern sense of moral obligation, who, in the spirit of the religion of their time, seldom spoke much of benevolence and philanthropy, but often of duty, crime, and sin." Many contemporary observers agreed and took the passage of the Abolition Act as a badge of British moral

rectitude. It also served as an early instance of legislative reform enacted to benefit large swathes of the population whose interests were not directly represented in Parliament. As such, it can be placed in a line with many of the legislative reforms that followed, which sought to protect the poor, children, women, workers, consumers, and many others thought to require support, aid, or protection.

The final historical event we might identify as the starting point for the Victorian period is the opening in 1830 of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, the first steam-powered railway line in the world. The next decade witnessed Railway Mania: more than six thousand miles of railway line were built as a result of projects initiated between 1844 and 1846 alone. By 1897, the country as a whole had 21,429 miles of track and an underground railway system beneath London. The train transformed Britain's landscape, supported the growth of its commerce, and shrank the distance between its cities. The opening of the railway was significant in and of itself, but it also serves to indicate the massive technological and industrial changes that took place throughout the mid- and late nineteenth century. "It is a privilege to live in this age of rapid and brilliant events," Benjamin Disraeli wrote in 1862. "What an error to consider it a utilitarian age. It is one of infinite romance." By the end of the century—after the resources of steam power had been more fully exploited for fast railways and iron ships, looms, printing presses, and farmers' combines, and after the introduction of the telegraph, intercontinental cable, photography, anesthetics, and universal compulsory education—a late Victorian could look back with astonishment on these developments. Walter Besant, one of these late Victorians, observed that so completely transformed were "the mind and habits of the ordinary Englishman" by 1897, "that he would not, could he see him, recognize his own grandfather."

The 1830s and 1840s

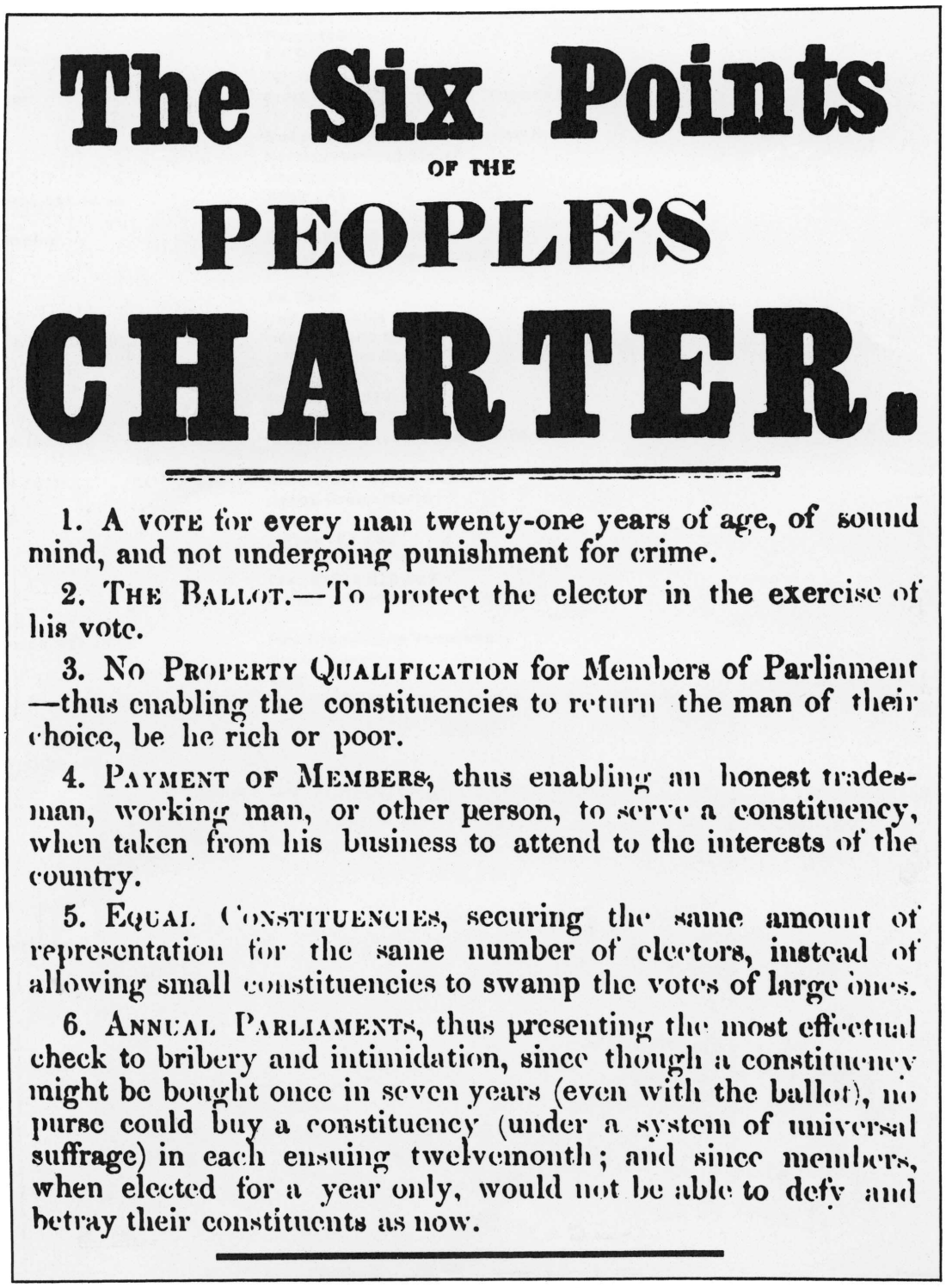
The early part of Victoria's reign was a period of hardship for many living in Great Britain. A time of prosperity from 1832 to 1836 was followed by a financial crash in 1837, and then a series of bad

harvests. The consequence was a period of unemployment and desperate poverty, often referred to as the "Time of Troubles," or the "Hungry Forties." Conditions in the new industrial and coal-mining areas were especially bad. Workers and their families in the slums of such cities as Manchester lived in horribly crowded, unsanitary housing, while the conditions under which men, women, and children toiled in mines and factories were appalling. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem "The Cry of the Children" (1843) expresses her horrified response to an official report on child labor that described five-year-olds sitting alone in darkness to open and close ventilation doors, and twelve-year-olds dragging heavy tubs of coal through low-ceilinged mine passages for sixteen hours a day. For the most part, the owners of mines and factories regarded themselves as innocent of blame for such conditions, wedded as they were to the economic theory of laissez-faire capitalism, which held that any governmental intervention into market operations would necessarily be harmful.

One kind of solution was offered by the Chartists, a large organization of workers who were unsatisfied by the advances made by the 1832 Reform Act. In 1838 they drew up a "People's Charter" advocating the extension of the right to vote, the use of secret balloting, and other legislative reforms. Although the Chartist movement did not achieve its immediate political goals, it did help promote the principle of social and economic reform: the notion that the government has a responsibility to support and protect all its people, not just wealthy landowners. An especially important instance of such reform was the abolition of the high tariffs on imported grains that were known as the Corn Laws (the word "*corn*" referred to wheat and other grains). These tariffs had been established to protect British agriculture from foreign competition. In 1845 serious crop failures in Britain, and the outbreak of potato blight in Ireland, convinced Sir Robert Peel, the Tory prime minister, that traditional protectionism must be abandoned. In 1846 the Corn Laws were repealed by Parliament, and the way was paved for the introduction of a system of free trade whereby goods could be imported with the payment of only minimal tariff duties. Free trade

did not eradicate the slums of Manchester and other industrial cities, and it did little to mitigate the Great Famine in Ireland, which ultimately claimed approximately one million lives, but it did help the Victorian economy.

Literary responses to the crisis of the 1840s range from Barrett Browning's poetic exposé of the conditions of working children, to Carlyle's furious—although occasionally sympathetic—denunciations of working-class lawlessness in "Chartism." Perhaps the best-known responses can be found in the novels of such authors as Charles Kingsley, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Benjamin Disraeli, who sought to document contemporary reality and spur political and social reform. For his novel *Sybil* (1845), Disraeli (eventually prime minister) chose an appropriate subtitle: *The Two Nations*. As he has one of his characters explain, the title refers to "Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets, who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws . . . THE RICH AND THE POOR." The belief that industrialization was bringing both cheap goods and an intensification of income disparity was shared by many, as was concern regarding the political consequences of this state of affairs.



The Six Points
OF THE
PEOPLE'S
CHARTER.

1. A VOTE for every man twenty-one years of age, of sound mind, and not undergoing punishment for crime.

2. THE BALLOT.—To protect the elector in the exercise of his vote.

3. NO PROPERTY QUALIFICATION for Members of Parliament —thus enabling the constituencies to return the man of their choice, be he rich or poor.

4. PAYMENT OF MEMBERS, thus enabling an honest tradesman, working man, or other person, to serve a constituency, when taken from his business to attend to the interests of the country.

5. EQUAL CONSTITUENCIES, securing the same amount of representation for the same number of electors, instead of allowing small constituencies to swamp the votes of large ones.

6. ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS, thus presenting the most effectual check to bribery and intimidation, since though a constituency might be bought once in seven years (even with the ballot), no purse could buy a constituency (under a system of universal suffrage) in each ensuing twelvemonth; and since members, when elected for a year only, would not be able to defy and betray their constituents as now.

Chartism. This poster lays out the six main points that Chartists believed were necessary to reform the electoral system and make it more democratic.

The 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s

For many living in Great Britain as members of the middle and upper classes, the mid-Victorian period was characterized by relative calm. Even the badly bungled war against Russia in the Crimea (1854–56) did not seriously affect the growing sense of satisfaction that the challenges of the 1840s had been solved or would be solved by British wisdom and energy. The aristocracy was discovering that "free trade" (often combined with gunboat diplomacy abroad) was enriching rather than impoverishing their estates; agriculture flourished together with trade and industry. And through a succession of Factory Acts in Parliament, which restricted child labor and limited hours of employment, the condition of the working classes was gradually improving.

The 1851 Great Exhibition in Hyde Park served as an extraordinary display of Great Britain's prosperity and self-satisfaction: a gigantic glass greenhouse, the Crystal Palace, was erected to showcase the greatest achievements of industry, science, and empire. The Crystal Palace was one of the first buildings constructed according to modern architectural principles in which materials such as glass and iron were employed for purely functional ends. Displays included everything from Staffordshire pottery to Indian diamonds to Maori handicrafts. As such, on display were not just triumphant feats of Victorian innovation, but the enormous might of the British empire.

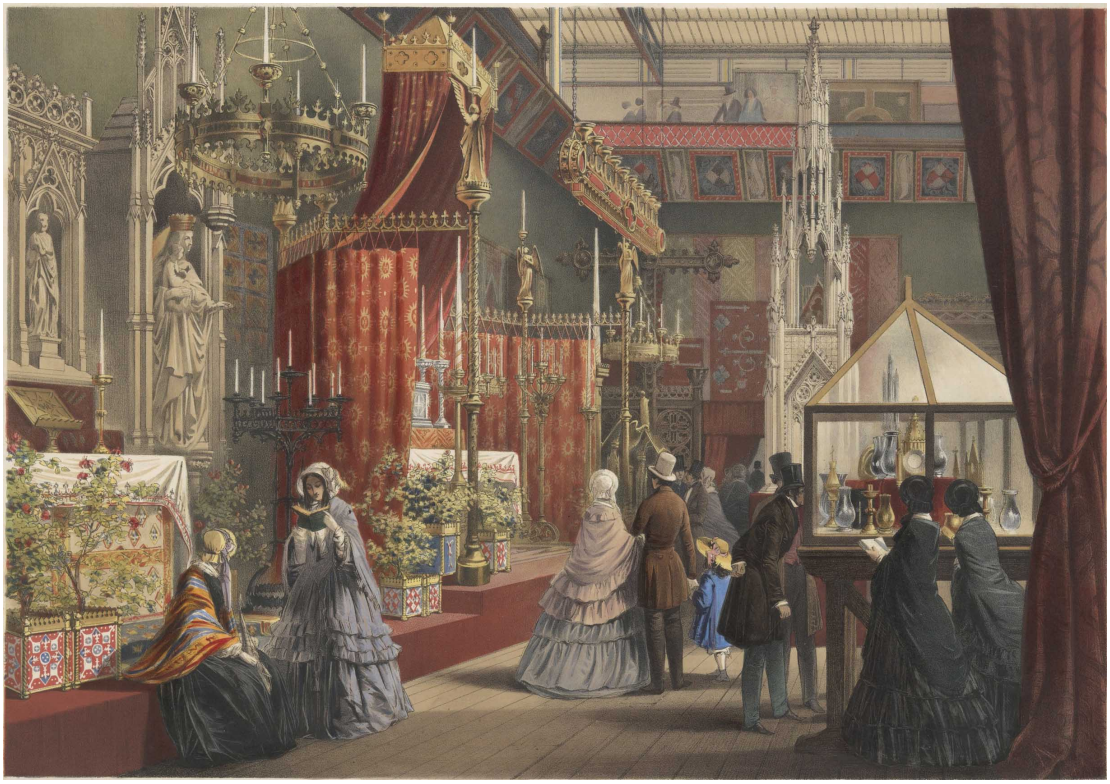
British prosperity was both fuelled by and served to fuel an enormous expansion of the country's operations around the globe. These activities had incalculably devastating effects on the territories Britain conquered and controlled, not least the destruction of many indigenous industries. The highly lucrative sugar trade was concentrated in the West Indies. At the beginning of the period, involvement in Africa was relatively limited, and focused on trade routes and markets; later in the century, its holdings and its commitment became much more extensive. Meanwhile, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada all functioned as "settler colonies," explicitly tasked with absorbing British transplants. Australia was

initially established as a penal colony, but by the 1850s, it along with Canada and New Zealand had become a popular destination for emigrants seeking cheap land and new opportunities. Between 1863 and 1880, 2,466,000 emigrants left Britain, many bound for British colonies. The consequences for Indigenous populations were devastating: military aggression, displacement, and new diseases brought from Europe, all worked together to decimate local populations. Nevertheless, many British people saw the expansion of empire as a moral responsibility. Queen Victoria stated that the imperial mission was "to protect the poor natives and advance civilization." Missionary societies flourished, spreading Christianity in India, Asia, and Africa.

While the British government was responsible for many forms of empire in the nineteenth century, the East India Company, which governed India until 1858, was a private corporation, formed in 1600 to trade in the East Indies and East Asia. By the time Victoria took the throne, the EIC had captured Java, Penang Island, Singapore, Malacca, and Burma. It never governed China, but it did force the Chinese to accept the opium trade (the cause of the First Opium War [1839–42]) and took over Hong Kong Island and Shanghai. Despite all these holdings, India was its greatest source of income: the EIC maintained a monopoly in the region through conquest and alliances with local rulers. It gained raw materials and a market for finished goods from this arrangement. But it also levied onerous taxes, and many EIC officials were notoriously corrupt. The "nabob" or British officer who makes his fortune in India under mysterious circumstances is a stock character in eighteenth- as well as nineteenth-century fiction.

The work of the EIC came to a halt after 1857, when Indian officers and local peasants violently rejected British rule. The event alerted at least some British citizens to the sheer brutality of empire in India, although others blamed the violence on Indian resistance and supposed ingratitude. The Indian Uprising encouraged Parliament to take over governance from the private corporation—British governmental rule began in 1858, and Queen Victoria was declared empress of India in 1876. But the Raj, as British

government rule was called, was not necessarily more humane or competent than the EIC. In certain respects, the situation worsened, since one consequence of the horrific violence of the Uprising was intense distrust on both sides. Nevertheless, throughout the nineteenth century, imperialism in India served as a critical engine for industrialization, providing capital, raw materials, and markets for finished goods.



The Medieval Court, Joseph Nash (1809–1878), from *Dickinson's Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851* (1854).

The predominance of Great Britain abroad was never fully secure, as evidenced in ongoing uprisings, wars, and skirmishes. It is also the case that developments outside the empire challenged the stability and security of inhabitants of Great Britain. The sudden emergence of Bismarck's Germany after the defeat of France in 1871 confronted Britain with powerful threats to its naval and military position as well as to its preeminence in trade and industry.

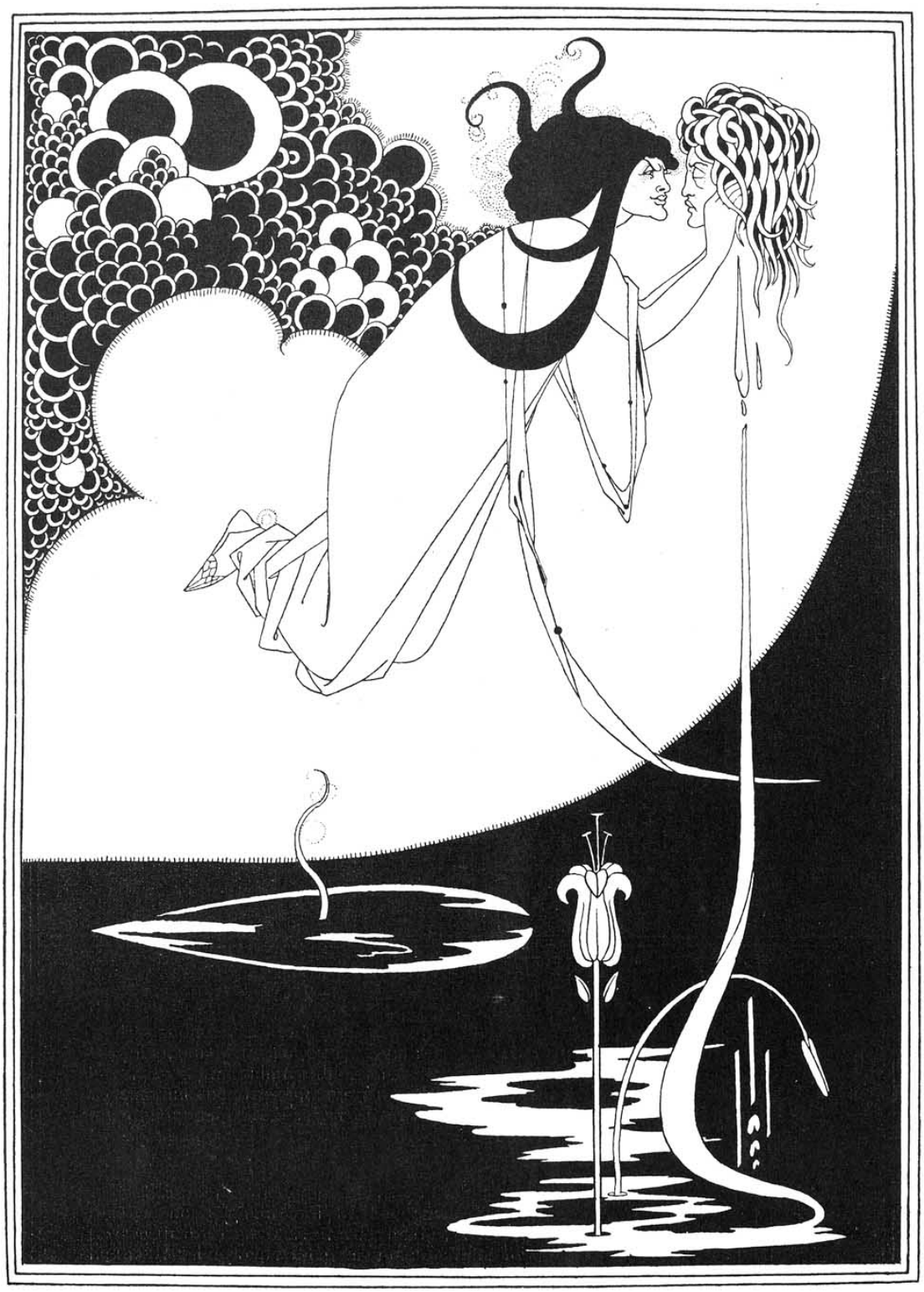
Meanwhile, the recovery of the United States after the Civil War provided new and serious competition in industry and agriculture. The status quo was also endangered by internal threats. In 1873 and 1874, severe economic depressions raised the rate of emigration to an alarming degree. Another change in the mid-Victorian balance of power was the growth of labor as a political and economic force. In 1867, under Disraeli's guidance, a second Reform Bill passed that extended the right to vote to sections of the working classes; the increasing educational opportunities that opened up for the poor over the course of the century also served to heighten political awareness and activity. These factors, together with the subsequent development of trade unions, made labor a powerful political force that included many forms of socialism. Some labor leaders were disciples of the Tory socialism of John Ruskin and shared his idealistic conviction that the middle-class economic and political system, with its distrust of state interference, was irresponsible and immoral. Other labor leaders had been influenced instead by the revolutionary theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels as expounded in their *Communist Manifesto* of 1847 and in Marx's *Das Kapital* (1867, 1885, 1895). The first British author of note to embrace Marxism was the poet and painter William Morris, who shared with Marx a conviction that utopia could be achieved only after the working classes had, by revolution, taken control of government and industry.

The 1880s and 1890s

The end of the century saw an enormous increase in imperial efforts. Such heightening is particularly evident in Africa, where European conquest and partition took place at staggering speed. In 1870 only about 10 percent of Africa was under formal European control. By 1914, that number had gone up to 90 percent. From Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast (Ghana), Nigeria, and the Cape Colony (South Africa), Great Britain expanded into the interior of Africa. It also sought control over Egypt, which it ultimately made a British protectorate, and the Egyptian colony of Sudan. Kenya and Uganda were also brought under British control before the end of the century.

Meanwhile, the work of building empire in India continued with the construction of railways and the building out of governmental apparatus. The "settler colonies" of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada were largely self-governing by the last part of the century. Empire was never a peaceful affair, and resistance was ongoing. The Jamaica Rebellion in 1865; the massacre of General Gordon and his soldiers at Khartoum, in the Sudan, in 1885, where he had been sent to evacuate the British; and two Anglo-Boer wars at the end of the century, in which Britain engaged in a long, bloody, and unpopular struggle to annex two independent republics in the south of Africa: all these events and many more called into question the stability of British governance abroad.

Meanwhile, back in Great Britain, the spoils of empire funded an explosion of consumer culture—at least some of which shaded over into a self-consciously decadent celebration of sensory pleasure. Artists of the 1890s, representing the aesthetic movement, were very much aware of living at the end of a great century and often cultivated a deliberately fin de siècle ("end-of-century") pose. A studied languor, a weary sophistication, a search for new ways of titillating jaded palates can be found in both the poetry and the prose of the period. *The Yellow Book*, a periodical that ran from 1894 to 1897, is generally taken to represent the aestheticism of the nineties. The startling black-and-white drawings and designs of its art editor, Aubrey Beardsley, the prose of George Moore and Max Beerbohm, and the plays of Oscar Wilde illustrate different aspects of the movement. Writings of the era that embraced other values and attracted broader readerships nevertheless shared aestheticism's perspective that a distinctly new spirit was at large, at least in the metropolis. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's hugely popular Sherlock Holmes stories, for instance, present a hero who simultaneously embodies and polices the city's cosmopolitan decadence and his bluff sidekick Dr. Watson, to whom London is "that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained." In 1893 the Jewish Austrian critic Max Nordau summed up what seemed to him to be happening, in a book that was as sensational as its title: *Degeneration.*



Salome. Oscar Wilde asked Aubrey Beardsley to illustrate the English translation of his play *Salome* (1894; the original version [1891] was in French); this image is titled *Climax*.

THE WANING OF BELIEF

One key issue throughout the nineteenth century had to do with challenges to orthodox religious belief. By the mid-Victorian period, the Church of England—the official state church of Great Britain—had evolved into three major divisions: Evangelical, or Low Church; Broad Church; and High Church. The Evangelicals were committed to the promotion of public welfare (they claimed much of the responsibility for the abolition of slavery in 1833), as well as a strict Puritan code of morality. They became a powerful and active minority in the early part of the nineteenth century, often joining forces with "Nonconformists" whose practices resembled their own: Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists, and other Protestant denominations. The High Church, often regarded as the "Catholic" side of the Church, emphasized the importance of tradition, ritual, and authority. Finally, the Broad Church resisted the doctrinal and ecclesiastical controversies that separated the High Church and Evangelical divisions. Open to modern advances in thought, its adherents emphasized the broadly inclusive nature of the Church.

Some rationalist challenges to religious belief that developed before the Victorian period maintained their influence. The most significant was Utilitarianism, also known as Benthamism or Philosophical Radicalism. Utilitarianism derived from the thought of Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) and his disciple James Mill (1773–1836), the father of John Stuart Mill. Bentham believed that all human beings seek to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. The criterion by which we should judge a morally correct action, therefore, is the extent to which it provides the greatest pleasure to the greatest number. Utilitarian commitment to the importance of legislation as a way to increase happiness was responsible for many of the most important reforms of the nineteenth century: the Factory Act of 1833 that prohibited children aged nine to thirteen from working more than forty-eight hours a week; the 1848 Public Health Act that sought to improve the sewer system and ensure clean

water; the 1870 Education Act that established and maintained schools; the gradual reform of the legal system. Bentham was concerned with the material welfare of the people, but he was less concerned with their emotional and spiritual needs, and he was dismissive of religion as superstition. This stance aroused considerable opposition. In his *Autobiography* (1873), for example, John Stuart Mill describes his realization that his utilitarian upbringing had left him no power to feel. In *Sartor Resartus* (1833–34) Carlyle describes a similar spiritual crisis in which he struggles to rediscover the springs of religious feeling in the face of his despair at the spectre of a universe governed only by utilitarian principles.

In mid-Victorian Britain, the challenge to religious belief gradually shifted from the Utilitarians to some of the leaders of science. Although many British scientists were themselves individuals of strong religious convictions, the impact of their scientific discoveries seemed consistently damaging to established faiths. Complaining in 1851 about the "flimsiness" of his own religious faith, Ruskin exclaimed: "If only the Geologists would let me alone, I could do very well, but those dreadful hammers! I hear the clink of them at the end of every cadence of the Bible verses." Ruskin is lamenting two phenomena here: first, the "Higher Criticism," a reading practice developed in Germany that treated the Bible not as a sacred and infallible document, but instead as a historical text. A noteworthy example of such Higher Criticism studies was David Friedrich Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu*, which was translated by George Eliot in 1846 as *The Life of Jesus.* The second kind of damage Ruskin references here is the view of humanity implicit in the discoveries of geology and astronomy, the new and "Terrible Muses" of literature, as Tennyson called them in a late poem. Geology, by extending the history of the earth backward millions of years, reduced the stature of the human species in time. John Tyndall, an eminent physicist, said in an address at Belfast in 1874 that in the eighteenth century people had an "unwavering trust" in the "chronology of the Old Testament" but in Victorian times they had to become accustomed to

> the idea that not for six thousand, nor for sixty thousand, nor for six thousand thousand, but for aeons embracing untold millions of years, this earth has been the theatre of life and death. The riddle of the rocks has been read by the geologist and paleontologist, from sub-Cambrian depths to the deposits thickening over the sea bottoms of today. And upon the leaves of that stone book are . . . stamped the characters, plainer and surer than those formed by the ink of history, which carry the mind back into abysses of past time.

The discoveries of astronomers, by extending a knowledge of stellar distances to dizzying expanses, were similarly disconcerting. Carlyle's friend John Sterling remarked in a letter of 1837 how geology "gives one the same sort of bewildering view of the abysmal extent of Time that Astronomy does of Space." To Tennyson's speaker in *Maud* (1855) the stars are "innumerable" tyrants of "iron skies." They are "Cold fires, yet with power to burn and brand / His nothingness into man."

In the mid-Victorian period, biology reduced humankind even further into "nothingness." Darwin's great treatise *The Origin of Species* (1859) offered a theory of "natural selection" that conflicted not only with the concept of creation derived from the Bible but also with long-established assumptions of the values attached to humanity's special role in the world. According to Darwin, there was no necessary conflict between his theory of "natural selection" and Christianity (although he was not a believer), but others disagreed. Darwin's later treatise *The Descent of Man* (1871) raised more explicitly the haunting question of our continuity with the animal kingdom, even as it offered a vigorous rebuttal of what came to be called "scientific racism," or the attempt to use science to make specious claims about biological differences between people of different races.

Disputes about evolutionary science, like the disputes about religion, are a reminder that beneath the placidly prosperous surface of the mid-Victorian age there were serious conflicts and anxieties. In the same year as the Great Exhibition, with its celebration of the

triumphs of trade and industry, Charles Kingsley wrote, "The young men and women of our day are fast parting from their parents and each other; the more thoughtful are wandering either towards Rome [that is, Roman Catholicism], towards sheer materialism, or towards an unchristian and unphilosophic spiritualism."

WOMEN AND THE POLITICS OF DOMESTICITY

Political and legal reforms in the course of the Victorian period had given citizens many rights, but women did not share in these freedoms. They could not vote or hold political office. (Although petitions to Parliament advocating women's suffrage were introduced as early as the 1840s, women did not get the vote until 1918.) Until the passage of the Married Women's Property Acts (1870–1908), married women could not own or handle their own property. While men could divorce their wives for adultery, wives could divorce their husbands only if adultery were combined with cruelty, bigamy, incest, or bestiality. Educational and employment opportunities for women were limited.

Legislative measures over the course of the nineteenth century gradually brought about changes in a number of areas. The Custody Act of 1839 gave a mother the right to petition the court for access to her minor children and custody of children under seven (raised to sixteen in 1878). The Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 established a civil divorce court (divorce previously could be granted only by an ecclesiastical court) and provided a deserted wife the right to apply for a protection order that would allow her rights to her property. Although divorce remained so expensive as to be available only to the very wealthy, these changes in marriage and divorce laws, together with the Married Women's Property Acts, began to establish a basis for the rights of women in marriage.

In addition to pressuring Parliament for legal reform, feminists worked to enlarge female educational opportunities. In 1837 none of the country's universities was open to women. Tennyson's long poem *The Princess* (1847), with its fantasy of a women's college from whose precincts all males are excluded, was inspired by contemporary discussions of the need for women to obtain an education more advanced than that provided by the popular finishing schools ("Miss Pinkerton's Academy" in William Makepeace

Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* [1847–48] is a good parody of one of these institutions). Although by the end of the poem Princess Ida has repented of her scheme, she and the prince look forward to a future in which man will be "more of woman, she of man." The poem reflects a climate of opinion that led in 1848 to the establishment of the first women's college in London. By the end of Victoria's reign, women could take degrees at twelve universities or university colleges and could study, although not earn a degree, at Oxford and Cambridge.

There was also agitation for improved employment opportunities for women. Writers as diverse as Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and Florence Nightingale complained that women from middle- and upper-class homes were taught trivial accomplishments to fill up days in which there was nothing important to do. Had they been aware of such complaints, women from the majority lower-class population might have found it hard to show sympathy: the working lives of poor British women had always been strenuous, but industrial society brought unprecedented pressures. Although the largest proportion of working women labored as servants in the homes of the more affluent, the explosive growth of mechanized industries, especially in the textile trade, created new and grueling forms of paid employment. Hundreds of thousands of lower-class women worked at factory jobs under appalling conditions, while the need for coal to fuel England's industrial development brought women into the mines for the first time. A series of Factory Acts (1802–78) gradually regulated the conditions of labor in mines and factories, eventually reducing the sixteen-hour day and banning women from mine work altogether; but even with such changes, the lot of the country's poorest women was undoubtedly hard. Bad working conditions and underemployment drove thousands of women into prostitution, which in the nineteenth century became increasingly professionalized—and the subject of an almost obsessive public concern, whose manifestations included frequent literary and artistic representation.

For the most part, prostitution was a trade for working-class women, but there was considerable anxiety about the possible fates of what contemporary journalists called the "surplus" or "redundant" women of the middle classes—that is, women who remained unmarried because of the imbalance in numbers between the sexes. Such women (of whom there were approximately half a million in mid-Victorian Britain) had few employment opportunities, none of them attractive or profitable. Emigration was frequently proposed as a solution to the problem, but the number of single female emigrants was never high enough to affect the population imbalance significantly. The only occupation at which an unmarried middle-class woman could earn a living and maintain some claim to gentility was that of a governess, but a governess could expect no security of employment, only minimal wages, and an ambiguous status, somewhere between servant and family member, that isolated her within the household. Perhaps because the governess so clearly indicated the precariousness of the unmarried middle-class woman's status in Victorian Britain, the governess novel, of which the most famous examples are *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Vanity Fair*, became a popular genre through which to explore women's roles in society.

As such novels indicate, Victorian society was preoccupied not only with legal and economic limitations on women's lives but also with the very nature of woman. In *The Subjection of Women,* John Stuart Mill argues that "what is now called the nature of women is eminently an artificial thing—the result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others." In Tennyson's *The Princess*, the king voices a more traditional view of male and female roles, a view that has come to be known as the doctrine of "separate spheres":

> Man for the field and woman for the hearth:
> Man for the sword and for the needle she:
> Man with the head and woman with the heart:
> Man to command and woman to obey.

The king's relegation of women to the hearth and heart reflects an ideology that claimed that woman had a special nature peculiarly fit for her domestic role. Most aptly epitomized by the title of Coventry Patmore's immensely popular poem *The Angel in the House* (1854–62), this concept of womanhood stressed woman's purity and selflessness. Protected and enshrined within the home, her role was to create a place of peace where man could take refuge from the difficulties of modern life. In "Of Queens' Gardens" (1865), John Ruskin writes:

> This is the true nature of home—it is the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division. In so far as it is not this, it is not home; so far as the anxieties of the outer life penetrate into it, and the inconsistently-minded, unknown, unloved, or hostile society of the outer world is allowed either by husband or wife to cross the threshold, it ceases to be home; it is then only a part of that outer world which you have roofed over, and lighted fire in. But so far as it is a sacred place, a vestal temple, a temple of the hearth watched over by Household Gods, . . . so far it vindicates the name, and fulfills the praise, of home.

However oppressive to individual women, the image of middle-class domestic virtue served important political ends. The middle class consistently charged the governing classes—which until the Reform Act of 1832 included only the aristocracy and the landed gentry—with superficiality and immorality, while grounding their own demands for political representation at least in part in values associated with domesticity. Victorian literature played a critical role in the dissemination of these ideas. William Makepeace Thackeray, Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Charlotte Brontë, John Ruskin—the list goes on and on—all implicitly or explicitly argued for a redistribution of political power to the middle class on the basis of its supposed commitment to a highly gendered division of ethical labor. Thus, while this account identified middle-class men with high

standards of self-restraint, fortitude, integrity, and loyalty, those values found their natural counterpart in the deep feelings—particularly the sympathy, compassion, and generosity of their wives, daughters, and sisters. What brought the two together was the Victorian home.

Even as this middle-class ideal did important political work at home, it also served important functions in the empire. The supposed harmoniousness and moral rectitude of middle-class home life served as an important justification for British claims to moral superiority and hence to the virtuousness of their imperial ambitions. In addition, the superiority of Englishwomen—their independence, access to education, and supposedly desexualized natures—served as an enormous point of pride as well as a justification for the kinds of values they could be trusted to disseminate. Women abroad were often tasked with missionary work, or other kinds of educational projects. But simply by being abroad, British women were understood to serve as an example for colonized people to emulate.

LITERARY INNOVATIONS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Realism and the Novel

Although its roots lie in literature of the eighteenth century, the realist novel was the predominant form of the nineteenth. Characterized by an interest in the ordinary lives of ordinary people, it tended to address experiences most readers might be expected to share: childhood, courtship and marriage, the discovery of a professional vocation, to name just a few. These novels often focus on members of the middle and occasionally the lower classes, rather than just the wealthy. And they tend to stay closely connected to the ordinary and the familiar, avoiding the fantastic, the lurid, the supernatural, or the remote. Certainly, many realist plots dip into the sensational: courtship might be complicated by an industrial riot, the discovery of a wicked plot, or an inheritance gone awry. But the starting point, and often the ending point, of these fictions tended to be in the familiar terrain of the home.

The realist novel was a popular form of entertainment, but it was also commonly understood to have a moral or even a social mission as well. As George Eliot wrote, famously, "The greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet, or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies. Appeals founded on generalizations and statistics require a sympathy ready-made, a moral sentiment already in activity; but a picture of human life such as a great artist can give, surprises even the trivial and the selfish into that attention to what is apart from themselves, which may be called the raw material of moral sentiment." The notion that art can encourage sympathy or care constituted a popular defense of the novel form. Particularly at a moment when the classes seemed to be drifting apart, the novel was commonly regarded as one way to bring them closer together. At least some writers and readers saw it as particularly well suited to capture the experience of living through the industrial revolution. By

contrast with the "knowable communities" of village life, the new urban slums of London, Birmingham, Manchester, and elsewhere seemed both teeming with life, and profoundly mysterious. Elizabeth Gaskell, Benjamin Disraeli, Charles Dickens, and others all took a turn describing the new urban landscape as a way to create greater sympathy between the classes.

Despite their shared commitment to the representation of "reality," the styles of these novelists varied extremely widely. So, for example, Dickens was known for exaggerated caricatures of known types—in this volume exemplified by Ebenezer Scrooge's "Bah Humbug," or Tiny Tim's infant piety. Meanwhile, Gaskell's industrial novel, *Mary Barton*, offers meticulous detail of her working-class characters' daily lives, and George Eliot was known for her depictions of complex states of mind. Stylistically, these writers might seem to have little in common, yet in their shared concern with the ordinary, the everyday, and the cultivation of sympathy they can all be said to have participated in the same project.

Realist fictions are often quite long—especially those that attempt to capture the experience of a community rather than an individual or even a family. Dickens's *Bleak House*, Eliot's *Middlemarch*, and Anthony Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* are good examples of this tendency, all weighing in at nine hundred pages or more. This tendency creates considerable difficulties for an anthology of this kind. Rather than portions of longer works, we have decided to include several shorter pieces in their entirety. The effect may be slightly distorting: realist writers often used their shorter works to experiment with nonrealist narrative forms. At the same time, the basic commitments and concerns of these shorter works are largely consistent with the novels. So, for example, the supernatural plot of Eliot's *The Lifted Veil* is highly unusual for this novelist, but its focus on sympathy is not. Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* works similarly: on the one hand, its supernatural plot clearly breaks with realist convention; on the other, its forms of characterization are ultimately typical of the author's art.

Publishing and Literacy

The sense of realism these writers describe—and specifically readers' sense of living with the characters they read about—can be at least partially attributed to changing modes of production, and specifically to the advent of serial publication. Increased literacy rates (largely thanks to new requirements for universal education) combined with technological changes—presses powered by steam, paper made from wood pulp rather than rags, and toward the end of the century, typesetting machines—to make publishing cheaper, which led to the number of newspapers, periodicals, and books increasing exponentially during the Victorian period. Books remained fairly expensive, and most readers borrowed them from commercial lending libraries. (There were few public libraries until the final decades of the century.) But after the repeal of the stamp tax and duties on advertisements just after mid-century, an extensive popular press developed, the most significant form of which was the periodical. In the first thirty years of the Victorian period, 170 new periodicals were started in London alone. There were magazines for every taste: cheap and popular magazines, like the "penny dreadfuls" that published sensational stories; religious monthlies; weekly newspapers; satiric periodicals noted for their political cartoons (the most famous of which was *Punch*); women's magazines; monthly miscellanies publishing fiction, poetry, and articles on current affairs; and literary and political reviews and quarterlies. The chief reviews and monthly magazines had a great deal of power and influence; they defined issues in public affairs, and they made and broke literary reputations. They also published the major writers of the period: the fiction of Dickens, Thackeray, Eliot, Trollope, Gaskell, and Hardy; the essays of Carlyle, Mill, Arnold, and Ruskin; and the poetry of Tennyson and the Brownings all appeared in monthly magazines.

The circumstances of periodical publication exerted a shaping force on literature. Although serial publication of works began in the late eighteenth century, it was the issue of Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* (1836–37) in individual numbers that established the popularity of the serial form. All of Dickens's novels and many of those of his

contemporaries were published in this manner. Readers therefore read these works in relatively short, discrete installments over a period that could extend more than a year, with time for reflection and interpretation in between. Serial publication encouraged a certain kind of plotting and pacing and allowed writers to take account of their readers' reactions as they constructed subsequent installments. It also created a distinctive sense of a community of readers, a sense further encouraged by the practice of reading aloud in family gatherings, in some workplaces, and in public performances. Combined with the common adaptation of popular fiction for the theatre, the effect was to make certain novels seem to provide a common language, bringing together members of different classes around a set of characters, plots, and concerns.

The novel form was democratizing in terms of its audience, appealing to a wide variety of readers. But it was also unusually open to new writers. Women writers, in particular, were, for the first time, not figures on the margins but major authors. Jane Austen, the Brontës, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot all helped define the genre. The novel often revolved around aspects of domestic life over which women were commonly accorded authority—courtship, family relationships, marriage. It also did not carry the burden of an august tradition as poetry did, nor did it build on the learning of a university education.

The very diversity of the British empire in the nineteenth century makes it difficult to generalize about reading practices and patterns of authorship. That said, the scholar Priya Joshi has demonstrated the popularity of certain kinds of fictions in India—the sensational writings of G. W. M. Reynolds and Edward Bulwer-Lytton, for example, along with the historical novels of Sir Walter Scott. These fictions influenced a whole generation of Indian writings in English and continue to impact the postcolonial novel of today. Meanwhile, the settler colony of Canada served as an enthusiastic audience for much British fiction—and poetry and prose—as well as a source of real-life adventure tales and stories of frontier life. (See Tekahionwake's "Indian Girl in Modern Fiction" for a funny send-up

of contemporary stereotypes of Indigenous Canadian life.) The colonies were both avid consumers of Victorian literature and also the source of writing back from the supposed margins.

Poetry

Although today we generally consider the novel as the most important literary form of the Victorian era, for many nineteenth-century readers, poetry was an even greater source of national pride as well as pleasure. Poetry became part of the lives of more people than ever before in the Victorian period, inasmuch as poems were printed in the pages of every kind of newspaper and periodical, regularly heard in domestic and public settings alike, and, from the late 1870s onward, repeatedly recited in the nation's growing network of schools for the masses. Although sometimes overshadowed by the twin peaks of Romantic and modernist achievement (and often disparaged by the latter), Victorian poetry played a uniquely important role in the lives of many Victorian readers. Influenced by the vibrancy and formal advances of the novel in this period, poets devised new ways of telling stories in verse; examples include Tennyson's *Maud*, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1857), Robert Browning's *The Ring and the Book* (1868–69), and Arthur Hugh Clough's *Amours de Voyage* (1857–58). Poets and critics debated what the appropriate subjects of such long narrative poems should be. Some, like Matthew Arnold, held that poets should use the heroic materials of the past; others, like Elizabeth Barrett Browning, felt that poets should represent "their age, not Charlemagne's." Poets also experimented with character and perspective. *Amours de Voyage* is a long epistolary poem that tells the story of a failed romance through letters written by its various characters; *The Ring and the Book* presents its plot—an old Italian murder story—through ten different perspectives.

Undeniably innovative, Victorian poetry was nevertheless deeply affected by the shadow of Romanticism. By 1837, when Victoria ascended the throne, all the major Romantic poets, save William Wordsworth, were dead, but they had died young, and many

readers consequently still regarded them as their contemporaries. Yet they do not generally demonstrate the confidence that the Romantics felt in the power of the imagination. Robert Browning took a different tack in turning away from the Romantics altogether and instead writing dramatic monologues—poems, he said, that are "Lyric in expression" but "Dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine." Tennyson simultaneously developed a more lyric form of the dramatic monologue. The idea of creating a lyric poem in the voice of a speaker ironically distinct from the poet is the great achievement of Victorian poetry.

While Victorian poetry is often described as highly visual and aural, and as interested in heightened states of emotion and the representation of psychology in new ways—at least some poets leaned in to the political power of poetry. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, for example, wrote passionately about the plight of enslaved people and overworked children. Tekahionwake uses her poetry to lament the beauty of her Mohawk people as well as the violence being perpetrated against them. Meanwhile, the work of Bengali poet Toru Dutt bridges the divide between political and post-Romantic poetry by splicing together Indian themes and stories with British poetic forms in a way that makes implicit claims about the potential compatibility yet distinctness of these different cultures.

Prose and the Victorian Sage

Although some Victorian poets may have felt ambivalent about the didactic mission the public expected of literary figures, writers of "nonfictional prose" aimed specifically to instruct. Although the term *nonfictional prose* is clumsy and not quite exact (the Victorians themselves referred instead to history, biography, theology, criticism, political economy, and so forth), it helps indicate the centrality of argument and persuasion to Victorian intellectual life. The growth of the periodical press, described earlier, provided the vehicle and marketplace for nonfictional prose. It reflects a vigorous sense of shared intellectual life and the public urgency of social and moral

issues. On a wide range of controversial topics—religious, political, and aesthetic—writers sought to convince their readers to share their convictions and values. Such writers seem at times almost secular priests.

On behalf of nonfictional prose, Walter Pater argued in his essay "Style" (1889) that it was "the special and opportune art of the modern world." He believed not that it was superior to verse but that it more readily conveys the "chaotic variety and complexity" of modern life, the "incalculable" intellectual diversity of the "master currents of the present time." Pater's characterization of prose helps us understand what its writers were attempting to do. Despite the diversity of styles and subjects, Victorian prose writers were engaged in shaping belief in a bewilderingly complex and changing world. Their modes of persuasion differ. Mill and Huxley rely on clear reasoning, logical argument, and the kind of lucid style favored by essayists of the eighteenth century. Carlyle and Ruskin write a prose that is more Romantic in character, that seeks to move readers as well as convince them. Meanwhile, Mohandas Gandhi uses a skeptical interlocutor to help elucidate his claims. Yet whatever the differences in their rhetorical techniques, they share an urgency of exposition and a sense that literature constitutes a powerful means of shaping public opinion.

Drama and Theater

The plays written and performed in the Victorian age, apart from those in the final decade of the century, have until recently received relatively little scholarly attention. Yet the theater, throughout the period, was a flourishing and popular institution, which staged not merely conventional dramas, but a rich variety of theatrical entertainments, many with lavish spectacular effects—burlesques, extravaganzas, highly scenic and altered versions of Shakespeare's plays, melodramas, pantomimes, and musicals. Robert Corrigan gives figures that suggest the extent of the popularity of such entertainment: "In the decade between 1850 and 1860 the number of theaters built throughout the country was doubled, and in the

middle of the sixties, in London alone, 150,000 would be attending the theater on any given day." The popularity of theatrical entertainment made it a powerful influence on other genres. Dickens was devoted to the theater and composed many of the scenes of his novels with theatrical techniques. Thackeray represents himself as the puppet master of his characters in *Vanity Fair* and employs the stock gestures and expressions of melodramatic acting in his illustrations for the novel. Tennyson, Browning, and Henry James tried their hands at writing plays, though with no commercial success. More successful stage plays were written by such figures as Dion Boucicault (1820–1890) and Henry Arthur Jones (1851–1921), prolific dramatists of the period. The comic operas of W. S. Gilbert (1836–1911) and Arthur Sullivan (1842–1900) were also hugely popular. Their satire of Victorian values and institutions, what Gilbert called their "topsyturvydom," and their grave and quasi-respectful treatment of the ridiculous not only make them delightful in themselves but anticipate the techniques of two great figures of British theater from this period, the Irishmen George Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde. Although they did not like each other's work, they both created a kind of comedy that took aim at Victorian pretense and hypocrisy.

Although no anthology can be comprehensive, this volume attempts to be more inclusive than its forebearers: more attentive to the political, economic, and social realities that underlay much British literature and culture in the nineteenth century, and more aware of the wide range of powerful and important voices that were writing in English beyond the British Isles. At the same time, any anthology is a product of its own historical moment as well as an attempt to capture another; as a result, it will always be partial or incomplete. The present is a moving target. Our goal has been to retain those texts and traditions that have been critical to the teaching of English literature for many decades, but also to include voices that will inspire new readers (and writers) coming to these texts with new concerns, questions, and needs. The Victorian period helped make

us what we are: its writers set many of the terms for our literature and culture; its thinkers on political and social issues continue to affect our assumptions and beliefs; its imperialists helped shaped the globe as we know it today. We hope to have captured some portion of this legacy in this volume.

The Victorian Age

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
	1807 Slave trade abolished
1830 Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*	**1830** Opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway
	1832 First Reform Bill
1833 Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*	**1833** Slavery Abolition Act passed
1836 Charles Dickens, *Pickwick Papers*	
	1837 Victoria becomes queen
	1838 Slavery fully abolished in British colonies. "People's Charter" issued by Chartist Movement

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
	1839 Custody Act gives mothers the right to petition for custody of children under seven
	1840 Queen marries Prince Albert
1843 Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*	**1842** Chartist riots. Copyright Act; Mudie's Circulating Library
	1845–51 Potato famine in Ireland. Mass emigration to North America
	1846 Repeal of Corn Laws
1847 Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*. Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*. Tennyson, *The Princess*	**1847** Ten Hours Factory Act
1848 Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton*. William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*	**1848** Revolution on the Continent

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
1850 Tennyson, *In Memoriam*. William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (posthumous pub.)	**1850** Tennyson succeeds Wordsworth as Poet Laureate
	1851 Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace
1852–53 Dickens, *Bleak House*	
	1854–56 Crimean War
1855 Robert Browning, *Men and Women*	
1857 Mary Seacole, *The Wonderful Adventures of Mary Seacole in Many Lands*. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*	**1857** Indian uprising. Matrimonial Causes Act
1859 Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*. George Eliot, *The Lifted Veil*	

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
1860 Dickens, *Great Expectations*. Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*	**1860** Italian unification
	1861 Death of Prince Albert
	1861–65 American Civil War
1862 Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market*	
1864 Robert Browning, *Dramatis Personae*	
1865 Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*	**1865** Jamaica Rebellion
1867 Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1	**1867** Second Reform Bill
	1868 Opening of Suez Canal
1869 Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy.* Mill, *The*	

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
Subjection of Women	
	1870 Married Women's Property Act. Victory in Franco-Prussian War makes Germany a world power. Elementary Education Act
1871 Darwin, *Descent of Man*	**1871** Newnham College (first women's Oxbridge college) founded at Cambridge
1872 Eliot, *Middlemarch*	
1873 Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*	**1873–74** Severe economic depression
1875 Anthony Trollope, *The Way We Live Now*	
	1876 Victoria declared empress of India
1882 Toru Dutt, *Ancient Ballads and Legends of*	

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
Hindustan	
	1885 General Gordon killed at Khartoum
1886 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*	
1889 William Butler Yeats, *Crossways*	
1891 Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Arthur Conan Doyle, *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*	**1891** Free elementary education
	1893 Independent Labour Party established
1895 Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*	**1895** Oscar Wilde arrested and imprisoned for homosexuality

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
	1899–1902 Anglo-Boer War
	1901 Death of Queen Victoria. Succession of Edward VII
1909 Mohandas Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*	
1913 English publication of Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*, *The Crescent Moon*, *The Gardener*, *Chitra*	

Great Britain's Imperial Mission

By the end of the nineteenth century, Great Britain controlled nearly a quarter of the earth's land surface and governed approximately four hundred million people. It achieved this far-flung empire through many different means—including violence, economic exploitation, and political patronage—and it governed in a variety of ways. The British Empire included Crown Colonies such as Jamaica, ruled from Britain, as well as protectorates such as Uganda, which relinquished only partial sovereignty to Britain. Ireland was a kind of internal colony whose demands for home rule were alternately entertained and discounted. India started out under the control of a private entity, the East India Company, but after the 1857 Indian Uprising (also known as the First War of Indian Independence) was ruled directly from Britain. "Settler" colonies—that is, colonies populated largely by European settlers who had appropriated Indigenous lands—such as Canada and Australia, tended to be largely self-governing. By contrast, colonies and protectorates with large Indigenous populations, such as Sierra Leone, or else with large populations of formerly enslaved people and non-European laborers, such as Trinidad, did not gain autonomy until the twentieth century. This cluster provides a brief and very partial introduction to some of these forms of empire. Its goal is to trace the contours of a single imperial project that assumed the right, or even the obligation, of White British men and women to appropriate lands, resources, and labor inhabited by others. It also seeks to illustrate the wide range of political, economic, and ideological forms that project took.

To summarize Britain's attitude toward its imperial activities over the centuries is no easy task. Economic motives predominated: Britain claimed territories outside its national borders in order to tax local populations; to obtain sugar, spices, tea, tin, opium, and

rubber; to procure markets for its own goods; and to secure trade routes. At the same time, apologists for empire emphasized Great Britain's supposedly philanthropic agenda, or the notion that Britain had a responsibility to provide the world with European government, education, and technology. Many assumed that through colonization, Britain would bestow the benefits of a supposedly superior civilization upon lesser peoples. Evangelical Christianity played a role as well, and not just through the missionaries who worked in India beginning in the early nineteenth century. More broadly, many Britons believed that Protestantism was the one true faith, and that it was their religious duty to bring the potential for salvation to as many souls as possible. For them, the imposition of British rule was divinely sanctioned. But there was still no widespread popular or governmental enthusiasm for the idea of imperialism as Britain's special destiny, and various factors, not least England's long and troubled relationship with Ireland, ensured that many viewed the project of colonial rule with suspicion throughout the middle years of the century.

The period from 1870 to 1900 witnessed a significantly more aggressive mode of empire building that would continue until World War I (1914–18). Britain's rivalry with its European neighbors was a key factor: the balance of power in Europe shifted in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71), leading to competition for new territories. Particularly fierce was "the scramble for Africa," as the brutal partitioning of that continent was called. Expansion did not go unchallenged—the British fought both with Indigenous peoples and with other European powers or settlers in numerous conflicts—but it progressed at an astonishing pace nonetheless. With the rise of the new imperialism, pre-existing ideas about Britain's superiority, now bolstered by supposedly "scientific" theories supporting the notion of its evolutionary advancement, were channelled into a romantic vision of the British Empire as a tremendous force for the good not only of the residents of Great Britain or those overseas of "British" (that is, supposedly "Anglo-Saxon," white) descent, but of the whole world. At the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, a large proportion of British people took pride in the global supremacy of

their empire and in what they perceived to be their generous and selfless willingness to pick up the thankless, but necessary, task of imperial rule ("the White Man's Burden," as Rudyard Kipling would call it in another context).



Victoria Presenting a Bible. *The Secret of England's Greatness (Queen Victoria Presenting a Bible in the Audience Chamber at Windsor)*, Thomas Jones Barker, ca. 1863. The decision to depict Queen Victoria presenting a Bible to an ambassador from East Africa reinforces the popular (and highly debatable) notion that British power derived from Christianity rather than from military might.

The British Empire took an incalculable toll on the individuals, communities, and cultures it colonized. Settler colonies such as Canada and Australia decimated indigenous populations through violence, displacement, and re-education. (The death toll at

Canadian "residential schools" for First Nations children is still not fully known.) The taxes levied on India caused mass impoverishment and famine. Millions of Africans were kidnapped and enslaved, forced to work on the plantations of the West Indies and elsewhere. The systems of apartheid imposed in South Africa continue to exert some force today. Hundreds of thousands died or were forced to flee as a result of the Great Famine in Ireland, during which grain continued to be exported to England. The legacies of empire are visible from Afghanistan to Zambia, from New Zealand to Hong Kong. It is not an exaggeration to say that many of the political conflicts we are experiencing today can be traced back to decisions made in the nineteenth century by a small group of White men living and working in London.

Empire brought the raw materials necessary for the industrial revolution to Great Britain; consequently, it also brought enormous wealth to the country, however inequitably distributed. The need to concentrate on the imperial mission also affected the consolidation of a specifically *British* identity: the conflicted relations and characteristic differences between people from the various parts of the British Isles (politically dominant England and long-conquered Wales, Scotland, and Ireland) appeared less significant when set against the much more obvious inequities of power and greater cultural, racial, religious, and linguistic differences across the globe. For instance, members of the working class in Great Britain only rarely connected their exploitation by the English ruling class to that suffered by colonized peoples. Intensified competition with the empire-building powers of continental Europe after the Franco-Prussian War also played an important role, as did the mounting stridency of other nationalist movements abroad. In the last quarter of the century, the patriotic fervor celebrating the achievements of the British nation increased dramatically—a phenomenon undoubtedly assisted by the growth both in the size of the reading public (thanks to the progressive extension of elementary education literacy was practically universal in Britain by 1900) and in the number of flag-waving newspapers, periodicals, and books available for it to consume.

The citizens of Great Britain were thus welded into a more cohesive whole. But few of them were ready to accept the peoples of the colonies (and especially Indigenous non-White populations) as truly "British," a state of affairs reflected in governmental structures. As J. A. Hobson, the author of the influential *Imperialism: A Study* (1902), pointed out, "not five per cent of the population of our Empire are possessed of any appreciable portion of the political and civil liberties which are the basis of British civilisation." Writing after Britain's imperial confidence had been severely damaged by the unanticipated length and difficulty of the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902 in South Africa, Hobson aimed not only to cast serious doubt on imperialism's putative financial benefit to Britain, but also to demonstrate the overall falsity of the empire's claim to support the extension of self-government in its territories. In exposing the repeated misrepresentations and self-serving justifications at the heart of the British Empire, Hobson joined voices with others around the globe, such as the West Indian intellectual J. J. Thomas, and entered a tradition of anti-imperial critique that was to grow exponentially in the twentieth century.

Following some general commentaries on empire from Richard Cobden (an unusually hostile observer of the spread of empire), John Stuart Mill, Sir Henry Newbolt, James Chamberlain, and J. A. Hobson, this cluster is broken down by type of colony: the plantation system; India (which is so large and complex as to require a category to itself); settler colonies; and the British Isles. It is worth noting that despite the enormous diversity represented in this list, it is by no means exhaustive: it does a disservice to the diversity of relations in Africa, South America, and East and Southeast Asia. And even within the types represented, many territories are excluded. Our goal is not to be exhaustive or comprehensive but instead to provide readers with a sense of some of the ideas about empire that were most influential for British literature.

RICHARD COBDEN

Liberal politician and advocate for free trade, Richard Cobden (1804–1865) here voices a critique of imperial aggression that was relatively unusual for the period. While some politicians and commentators expressed concern regarding the cost of empire, and others worried that young men sent abroad might be corrupted by the experience, relatively few objected to empire, *tout court*. In the pamphlet *How Wars Are Got Up in India* (1853), Cobden objects both to the circumstances leading up to the Second Burmese War—a territorial war that ultimately spanned sixty years—and to its exorbitant cost, which he points out was largely borne by India. "To the latter evil [that is, the financial burden on India]," he writes, "growing out of our insatiable love of territorial aggrandizement, we shall probably be willfully blind, until awakened from a great national illusion by some rude shock to the fabric of our Indian finance."

From How Wars Are Got Up in India

Public opinion in this country has not hitherto been opposed to an extension of our dominion in the East.[1] On the contrary, it is believed to be profitable to the nation, and all classes are ready to hail with approbation every fresh acquisition of territory, and to reward those conquerors who bring us home title-deeds, no matter I fear, how obtained, to new Colonial possessions. So long as they are believed to be profitable, this spirit will prevail.

But it is not consistent with the supremacy of that moral law, which mysteriously sways the fate of empires, as well as of individuals, that deeds of violence, fraud and injustice, should be committed with permanent profit and advantage. If wrongs are perpetrated in the name, and by the authority of this great country, by its proconsuls or naval commanders in distant quarters of the globe, it is not by throwing the flimsy veil of a "double government"[2] over such transactions, that we shall ultimately escape the penalty attaching to deeds for which we are really responsible. How, or when, the retribution will react upon us, I presume not to say. The rapine in Mexico and Peru[3] was retaliated upon Spain, in the ruin of her finances. In France, the *razzias* of Algeria were repaid by her own troops, in the massacres of the Boulevards,[4] and the savage combats in the streets of Paris. Let us hope that the national conscience, which has before averted from England, by timely atonement and reparation, the punishment due for imperial crimes,[5] will be roused ere it be too late from its lethargy, and put an end to the deeds of violence and injustice which have marked every step of our progress in India.

1853

Endnotes

- Note 1: India as well as Burma.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The system by which stockholders in the East India Company shared responsibility with the British government for governing India.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821. Peru gained independence in 1826.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: One important cause of the French Revolution of 1848 involved an incident in which French soldiers fired on a crowd of protestors. "*Razzias*": hostile raids.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Reference to the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and of slavery in 1833.Return to reference 5

JOHN STUART MILL

Philosopher, politician, and long-time employee of the East India Company, John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) was one of the foremost theorists of liberty and liberalism of the nineteenth century. He was also a defender of "benevolent" empire, or the notion that imperialism was legitimate when it brought progress or improvement to "backward" peoples. In "A Few Words on Non-Intervention" (1859), Mill argues that although in general governments should refrain from encroaching on one another's concerns, different rules apply to what he terms "barbarians." The notion that the British, like the ancient Romans, had a responsibility to use imperialism to civilize the uncivilized was common at this time. For a more complete account of Mill's career, see his entry in this volume.

A Few Words on Non-Intervention

There is a great difference between the case in which the nations concerned are of the same, or something like the same, degree of civilization, and that in which one of the parties to the situation is of a high, and the other of a very low, grade of social improvement. To suppose that the same international customs, and the same rules of international morality, can obtain between one civilized nation and another, and between civilized nations and barbarians, is a grave error, and one which no statesman can fall into, however it may be with those who, from a safe and unresponsible position, criticise statesmen. Among many reasons why the same rules cannot be applicable to situations so different, the two following are among the most important. In the first place, the rules of ordinary international morality imply reciprocity. But barbarians will not reciprocate. They cannot be depended on for observing any rules. Their minds are not capable of so great an effort, nor their will sufficiently under the influence of distant motives. In the next place, nations which are still barbarous have not got beyond the period during which it is likely to be for their benefit that they should be conquered and held in subjection by foreigners. Independence and nationality, so essential to the due growth and development of a people further advanced in improvement, are generally impediments to theirs. The sacred duties which civilized nations owe to the independence and nationality of each other, are not binding towards those to whom nationality and independence are either a certain evil, or at best a questionable good. The Romans were not the most clean-handed of conquerors, yet would it have been better for Gaul and Spain, Numidia and Dacia, never to have formed part of the Roman Empire? To characterize any conduct whatever towards a barbarous people as a violation of the law of nations, only shows that he who so speaks has never considered the subject. A violation of great principles of morality it may easily be; but barbarians have no rights as a *nation,*

except a right to such treatment as may, at the earliest possible period, fit them for becoming one. The only moral laws for the relation between a civilized and a barbarous government, are the universal rules of morality between man and man.

The criticisms, therefore, which are so often made upon the conduct of the French in Algeria, or of the English in India,[1] proceed, it would seem, mostly on a wrong principle. The true standard by which to judge their proceedings never having been laid down, they escape such comment and censure as might really have an improving effect, while they are tried by a standard which can have no influence on those practically engaged in such transactions, knowing as they do that it cannot, and if it could, ought not to be observed, because no human being would be the better, and many much the worse, for its observance.

1859

Endnotes

- Note 1: The privately held East India Company gradually expanded its rule over India until uprisings in 1857 led the British Crown to take over governance. “French in Algeria”: French rule in Algeria lasted from 1830 to 1962.Return to reference 1

SIR HENRY JOHN NEWBOLT

A practicing lawyer until 1899, Henry John Newbolt (1862–1938) composed novels, histories, and a play over the course of his writing career, but his literary reputation was secured by the stirring patriotic poems, often in ballad form and on naval themes, that he published in such volumes as *Admirals All* (1897), *The Island Race* (1898), and *Songs of the Sea* (1904). Newbolt was knighted in 1915; in 1921 he chaired a governmental investigation of the teaching of English in the schools of England and Wales.

Vitaï Lampada[1]

There's a breathless hush in the Close[2] to-night—
  Ten to make and the match to win—
A bumping pitch and a blinding light,
  An hour to play and the last man in.
And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat,
  Or the selfish hope of a season's fame,
But his Captain's hand on his shoulder smote
  "Play up! play up! and play the game!"

The sand of the desert is sodden red,—
  Red with the wreck of a square[3] that broke;—
The Gatling's[4] jammed and the colonel dead
  And the regiment blind with dust and smoke.
The river of death has brimmed his banks,
  And England's far, and Honour a name,
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks,
  "Play up! play up! and play the game!"

This is the word that year by year
  While in her place the School is set
Every one of her sons must hear,
  And none that hears it dare forget.
This they all with a joyful mind
  Bear through life like a torch in flame,
And falling fling to the host behind—
  "Play up! play up! and play the game!"

1897

Endnotes

- Note 1: The torch of life (Latin); see *De Rerum Natura* (*On the Nature of the Universe*) II. 79, by the Roman poet and philosopher Lucretius (ca. 99–ca. 55 B.C.E.). The words are taken from a description of a relay race in which a flaming torch is passed from runner to runner.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The name of the cricket ground at Clifton College, an elite boarding school for boys founded in Bristol in 1862. Newbolt won a scholarship to Clifton from his local grammar school and became head boy there in 1881.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A combat formation taken by an infantry unit when threatened with cavalry attack.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Forerunner of the modern machine gun, the Gatling gun was invented in the United States in 1861.Return to reference 4

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN

Joseph Chamberlain (1836–1914) was a manufacturer who made his fortune at the age of thirty-eight; he spent the rest of his life in politics, generally allying himself with radical causes. An enthusiastic promoter of imperial expansion and consolidation, he was appointed colonial secretary in 1895. The following selection is taken from a speech Chamberlain delivered in 1897 at the Royal Colonial Institute's annual dinner; published later that year in his *Foreign and Colonial Speeches*, the text records the frequent "cheers" and "laughter" and expressions of agreement ("hear, hear") that greeted his performance.

From The True Conception of Empire

It seems to me that there are three distinct stages in our Imperial history. We began to be, and we ultimately became, a great Imperial Power in the eighteenth century, but, during the greater part of that time, the colonies were regarded, not only by us, but by every European Power that possessed them, as possessions valuable in proportion to the pecuniary advantage which they brought to the mother country which, under that order of ideas, was not truly a mother at all, but appeared rather in the light of a grasping and absentee landlord desiring to take from his tenants the utmost rents he could exact. The colonies were valued and maintained because it was thought that they would be a source of profit—of direct profit—to the mother country.

That was the first stage, and when we were rudely awakened by the War of Independence in America from this dream, that the colonies could be held for our profit alone, the second chapter was entered upon, and public opinion seems then to have drifted to the opposite extreme; and, because the colonies were no longer a source of revenue, it seems to have been believed and argued by many people that their separation from us was only a matter of time, and that that separation should be desired and encouraged lest haply they might prove an encumbrance and a source of weakness.

It was while those views were still entertained, while the little Englanders[1]—(laughter)—were in their full career, that this Institute was founded to protest against doctrines so injurious to our interests—(cheers)—and so derogatory to our honour; and I rejoice that what was then, as it were, "a voice crying in the wilderness"[2] is now the expressed and determined will of the overwhelming majority of the British people. (Loud cheers.) Partly by the efforts of this Institute and similar organisations, partly by the writings of such

men as Froude and Seeley[3]—(hear, hear)—but mainly by the instinctive good sense and patriotism of the people at large, we have now reached the third stage in our history, and the true conception of our Empire. (Cheers.)

What is that conception? As regards the self-governing colonies[4] we no longer talk of them as dependencies. The sense of possession has given place to the sentiment of kinship. We think and speak of them as part of ourselves—(cheers)—as part of the British Empire, united to us, although they may be dispersed throughout the world, by ties of kindred, of religion, of history, and of language, and joined to us by the seas that formerly seemed to divide us. (Cheers.)

But the British Empire is not confined to the self-governing colonies and the United Kingdom. It includes a much greater area, a much more numerous population in tropical climes, where no considerable European settlement is possible, and where the native population must always vastly outnumber the white inhabitants; and in these cases also the same change has come over the Imperial idea. Here also the sense of possession has given place to a different sentiment—the sense of obligation. We feel now that our rule over these territories can only be justified if we can show that it adds to the happiness and prosperity of the people—(cheers)—and I maintain that our rule does, and has, brought security and peace and comparative prosperity to countries that never knew these blessings before. (Cheers.)

In carrying out this work of civilisation we are fulfilling what I believe to be our national mission, and we are finding scope for the exercise of those faculties and qualities which have made of us a great governing race. (Cheers.) I do not say that our success has been perfect in every case, I do not say that all our methods have been beyond reproach; but I do say that in almost every instance in which the rule of the Queen has been established and the great *Pax Britannica*[5] has been enforced, there has come with it greater security to life and property, and a material improvement in the condition of the bulk of the population. (Cheers.) No doubt, in the first instance, when these conquests have been made, there has

been bloodshed, there has been loss of life among the native populations, loss of still more precious lives among those who have been sent out to bring these countries into some kind of disciplined order, but it must be remembered that that is the condition of the mission we have to fulfil.

***

You cannot have omelettes without breaking eggs; you cannot destroy the practices of barbarism, of slavery, of superstition, which for centuries have desolated the interior of Africa, without the use of force; but if you will fairly contrast the gain to humanity with the price which we are bound to pay for it, I think you may well rejoice in the result of such expeditions as those which have recently been conducted with such signal success—(cheers)—in Nyassaland, Ashanti, Benin, and Nupé[6]—expeditions which may have, and indeed have, cost valuable lives, but as to which we may rest assured that for one life lost a hundred will be gained, and the cause of civilisation and the prosperity of the people will in the long run be eminently advanced. (Cheers.) But no doubt such a state of things, such a mission as I have described, involve heavy responsibility. In the wide dominions of the Queen the doors of the temple of Janus[7] are never closed—(hear, hear)—and it is a gigantic task that we have undertaken when we have determined to wield the sceptre of empire. Great is the task, great is the responsibility, but great is the honour—(cheers); and I am convinced that the conscience and the spirit of the country will rise to the height of its obligations, and that we shall have the strength to fulfil the mission which our history and our national character have imposed upon us. (Cheers.)

1897

Endnotes

- Note 1: Critics of imperial expansion who advocated sharply limiting the scope and responsibilities of the British

Empire.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Allusion to the Gospels, especially Matthew 3:3; the phrase is usually interpreted as referring to John the Baptist's prophecies of the coming of Jesus.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Sir John Robert Seeley (1834–1895), English historian, essayist, and author of *The Expansion of England* (1883), which portrays the growth of the British Empire as a natural process. James Anthony Froude (1818–1894), English author and historian.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: British peace (Latin), which the British Empire supposedly imposed on its colonial possessions (by analogy with the *pax Romana* of the Roman Empire).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: All areas of British exploration on the African continent during the last decades of the 19th century. Nyassaland (or Nyasaland), a region of southeastern Africa that constitutes modern-day Malawï. Ashanti (also Asante, Ashantee), a western African state located in the territory of present-day Ghana. Benin, a state in western Africa later incorporated into Nigeria. Nupé, an area of western Africa that is now part of Nigeria.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Twin-faced Roman god of doorways. The doors to his temple near the Roman Forum were kept open during wartime and closed during times of peace.Return to reference 7

J. A. HOBSON

J . A. (John Atkinson) Hobson (1858–1940), the distinguished Liberal economist and author, first taught classics and then worked as a lecturer in English literature and economics for the Oxford University Extension Delegacy and for the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching, before becoming a freelance writer. His many books include *Problems of Poverty* (1891), *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism* (1894), *The Problem of the Unemployed* (1896), and *John Ruskin, Social Reformer* (1898).

From Imperialism: A Study

[THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF IMPERIALISM]

The curious ignorance which prevails regarding the political character and tendencies of Imperialism cannot be better illustrated than by the following passage from a learned work upon "The History of Colonisation":[1] "The extent of British dominion may perhaps be better imagined than described, when the fact is appreciated that, of the entire land surface of the globe, approximately one-fifth is actually or theoretically under that flag, while more than one-sixth of all the human beings living in this planet reside under one or the other type of English colonisation. The names by which authority is exerted are numerous, and processes are distinct, but the goals to which this manifold mechanism is working are very similar. According to the climate, the natural conditions and the inhabitants of the regions affected, procedure and practice differ. The means are adapted to the situation; there is not any irrevocable, immutable line of policy: from time to time, from decade to decade, English statesmen have applied different treatments to the same territory. Only one fixed rule of action seems to exist; it is to promote the interests of the colony to the utmost, to develop its scheme of government as rapidly as possible, and eventually to elevate it from the position of inferiority to that of association. Under the charm of this beneficent spirit the chief colonial establishments of Great Britain have already achieved substantial freedom, without dissolving nominal ties; the other subordinate possessions are aspiring to it, while, on the other hand, this privilege of local independence has enabled England to assimilate with ease many feudatory States[2] into the body politic of her system." Here then is the theory that Britons are a race endowed, like the Romans, with a genius for government, that our colonial and imperial policy is animated by a resolve to spread

throughout the world the arts of free self-government which we enjoy at home,[3] and that in truth we are accomplishing this work.

Now, without discussing here the excellencies or the defects of the British theory and practice of representative self-government, to assert that our "fixed rule of action" has been to educate our dependencies in this theory and practice is quite the largest misstatement of the facts of our colonial and imperial policy that is possible. Upon the vast majority of the populations throughout our Empire we have bestowed no real powers of self-government, nor have we any serious intention of doing so, or any serious belief that it is possible for us to do so.

Of the three hundred and sixty-seven millions of British subjects outside these isles, not more than ten millions, or one in thirty-seven, have any real self-government for purposes of legislation and administration.

Political freedom, and civil freedom, so far as it rests upon the other, are simply non-existent for the over-whelming majority of British subjects. In the self-governing colonies of Australasia and North America alone is responsible representative government a reality, and even there considerable populations of outlanders,[4] as in West Australia, or servile labour, as in Queensland, temper the genuineness of democracy. In Cape Colony and Natal recent events[5] testify how feebly the forms and even the spirit of the free British institutions have taken root in States where the great majority of the population were always excluded from political rights. The franchise and the rights it carries will remain virtually a white monopoly in so-called self-governing colonies, where the coloured population is to the white as four to one and ten to one respectively.

In certain of our older Crown colonies there exists a representative element in the government. While the administration is entirely vested in a governor appointed by the Crown, assisted by a council nominated by him, the colonists elect a portion of the legislative assembly. The following colonies belong to this order: Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad, Bahamas, British Guiana, Windward Islands, Bermudas, Malta, Mauritius, Ceylon.

The representative element differs considerably in size and influence in these colonies, but nowhere does it outnumber the non-elected element. It thus becomes an advisory rather than a really legislative factor. Not merely is the elected always dominated in numbers by the non-elected element, but in all cases the veto of the Colonial Office is freely exercised upon measures passed by the assemblies. To this it should be added that in nearly all cases a fairly high property qualification is attached to the franchise, precluding the coloured people from exercising an elective power proportionate to their numbers and their stake in the country.

The entire population of these modified Crown colonies amounted to 5,700,000 in 1898.[6]

The overwhelming majority of the subjects of the British Empire are under Crown colony government, or under protectorates. In neither case do they enjoy any of the important political rights of British citizens: in neither case are they being trained in the arts of free British institutions. In the Crown colony the population exercises no political privileges. The governor, appointed by the Colonial Office, is absolute, alike for legislation and administration; he is aided by a council of local residents usually chosen by himself or by home authority, but its function is merely advisory, and its advice can be and frequently is ignored. In the vast protectorates we have assumed in Africa and Asia there is no tincture of British representative government; the British factor consists in arbitrary acts of irregular interference with native government. Exceptions to this exist in the case of districts assigned to Chartered Companies, where business men, animated avowedly by business ends, are permitted to exercise arbitrary powers of government over native populations under the imperfect check of some British Imperial Commissioner.

Again, in certain native and feudatory States of India our Empire is virtually confined to government of foreign relations, military protection, and a veto upon grave internal disorder, the real administration of the countries being left in the hands of native princes or headmen. However excellent this arrangement may be, it

lends little support to the general theory of the British Empire as an educator of free political institutions.

Where British government is real, it does not carry freedom or self-government; where it does carry a certain amount of freedom and self-government, it is not real. Not five per cent of the population of our Empire are possessed of any appreciable portion of the political and civil liberties which are the basis of British civilisation. Outside the ten millions of British subjects in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, no considerable body is endowed with full self-government in the more vital matters, or is being "elevated from the position of inferiority to that of association."

This is the most important of all facts for students of the present and probable future of the British Empire. We have taken upon ourselves in these little islands the responsibility of governing huge aggregations of lower races in all parts of the world by methods which are antithetic to the methods of government which we most value for ourselves.

1902

Endnotes

- Note 1: H. C. Morris, *The History of Colonization* (1900), vol. 2, p. 80 [*Hobson's note*]. The work's full title is *The History of Colonization from the Earliest Times to the Present Day.*Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Feudally subject states.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: "The British Empire is a galaxy of free States," said Sir W. Laurier in a speech, 8 July 1902 [***Hobson's note***]. Sir Wilfrid Laurier (1841–1919), Canadian political leader.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Foreigners denied full citizenship.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902, fought between the British and the Dutch Afrikaners, or Boers, who had settled in regions of South Africa. Cape Colony and Natal, former British

colonies now part of modern-day South Africa, were sites of long-standing friction between the British and the Boers.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: In all essential features, India and Egypt are to be classed as Crown colonies [*Hobson's note*].Return to reference 6

Slavery, Abolition, and the Plantation System

Although Great Britain abolished the slave trade in 1807 and slavery in 1834–38, the legacy of the enslavement of African men and women remained a charged topic for many British people throughout the nineteenth century. In part, this interest can be attributed to the continued existence of slavery in the United States and elsewhere. The end of slavery in Great Britain was also drawn out: in the West Indies, for example, abolition was followed by a period of forced "apprenticeships." There were also intense ongoing debates over the extent of British financial responsibility to "West Indians" (British plantation owners and enslavers)—although there was relatively little concern about the fate of the formerly enslaved. Thus, even as British liberals often pointed to the abolition of slavery as evidence of the nation's willingness to make sacrifices in order to fulfil their ideas of "duty, crime, and sin" (to quote John Stuart Mill), they also often failed to take responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

MARY PRINCE

Mary Prince (1788–ca. 1833) was born into slavery in the British colony of Bermuda. Her enslavers brought her to England in 1828. Shortly after her arrival, she appealed to the Anti-Slavery Society in London for help in achieving legal recognition of her right to return to Antigua (her and her husband's most recent home) as a free woman. Thomas Pringle, secretary to the Anti-Slavery Society, along with Susanna Strickland (later Moodie, whose writings on Canada appear in this cluster) transcribed, edited, and published her *History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave* (1831) in an attempt to bring attention to her case. The *History* is the first narrative of a formerly enslaved woman published in Britain. Prince's descriptions of the physical, emotional, and sexual abuse to which she had been subjected had a considerable impact on public opinion.

From The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave

I am often much vexed, and I feel great sorrow when I hear some people in this country say, that the slaves do not need better usage, and do not want to be free.[1] They believe the foreign people,[2] who deceive them, and say slaves are happy. I say, Not so. How can slaves be happy when they have the halter round their neck and the whip upon their back? and are disgraced and thought no more of than beasts?—and are separated from their mothers, and husbands, and children, and sisters, just as cattle are sold and separated? Is it happiness for a driver in the field to take down his wife or sister or child, and strip them, and whip them in such a disgraceful manner? —women that have had children exposed in the open field to shame! There is no modesty or decency shown by the owner to his slaves; men, women, and children are exposed alike. Since I have been here I have often wondered how English people can go out into the West Indies and act in such a beastly manner. But when they go to the West Indies, they forget God and all feeling of shame, I think, since they can see and do such things. They tie up slaves like hogs—moor[3] them up like cattle, and they lick them, so as hogs, or cattle, or horses never were flogged;—and yet they come home and say, and make some good people believe, that slaves don't want to get out of slavery. But they put a cloak about the truth. It is not so. All slaves want to be free—to be free is very sweet. I will say the truth to English people who may read this history that my good friend, Miss S——,[4] is now writing down for me. I have been a slave myself —I know what slaves feel—I can tell by myself what other slaves feel, and by what they have told me. The man that says slaves be quite happy in slavery—that they don't want to be free—that man is either ignorant or a lying person. I never heard a slave say so. I never heard a Buckra[5] man say so, till I heard tell of it in England.

Such people ought to be ashamed of themselves. They can't do without slaves, they say. What's the reason they can't do without slaves as well as in England? No slaves here—no whips—no stocks—no punishment, except for wicked people. They hire servants in England; and if they don't like them, they send them away: they can't lick them. Let them work ever so hard in England, they are far better off than slaves. If they get a bad master, they give warning and go hire to another. They have their liberty. That's just what *we* want. We don't mind hard work, if we had proper treatment, and proper wages like English servants, and proper time given in the week to keep us from breaking the Sabbath. But they won't give it: they will have work—work—work, night and day, sick or well, till we are quite done up; and we must not speak up nor look amiss, however much we be abused. And then when we are quite done up, who cares for us, more than for a lame horse? This is slavery. I tell it, to let English people know the truth; and I hope they will never leave off to pray God, and call loud to the great King of England, till all the poor blacks be given free, and slavery done up for evermore.

1831

Endnotes

- Note 1: The whole of this paragraph especially, is given as nearly as was possible in Mary's precise words [*Pringle's note*].Return to reference 1
- Note 2: She means West Indians [*Pringle's note*]. By *West Indians*, Pringle means British owners of plantations in the West Indies.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A West Indian phrase: to fasten or tie up [*Pringle's note*].Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Susanna Strickland, later Moodie, who transcribed the *History*.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: West African term for a White man, especially a White enslaver.Return to reference 5

THOMAS CARLYLE and JOHN STUART MILL

In his "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question," Carlyle (1795–1881) is responding to two sets of conditions: first, diminishing profits in the West Indies in the wake of the abolition of slavery, along with the largely fruitless attempts of the British government to shore them up; and second, the famine in Ireland that claimed approximately 1 million lives between 1845 and 1849. Carlyle toured Ireland in 1849 and was appalled by the hunger and the mismanagement he witnessed there. His text is far more than simply a response to this experience, however, for here he sounds many of the keynotes of his career: the importance of organic (and hierarchical) relations between "masters" and "men"; a disgust for philanthropy focused on far-distant abuses rather than those on Britain's doorstep—such as the famine in Ireland; the "gospel of work" that justifies forcing people to work if they will not do so voluntarily. For contemporary readers, it should be noted that this reading reproduces racist beliefs and uses racist terminology.

Although other selections in this volume reflect John Stuart Mill's commitment to "enlightened imperialism," or the notion that Great Britain has a responsibility to civilize barbaric peoples, in "The Negro Question" (1850), his response to Carlyle, Mill (1806–1873) defends formerly enslaved people in the West Indies against Carlyle's claim that they have the "right" to be forced to work. He rejects Carlyle's assertion that work is an end in and of itself, and rather than "noble," he describes the spices and sugar that Carlyle so prizes as foolish indulgences. He also recasts the abolition of slavery not as the product of sentimentality—as Carlyle claims—but instead as the consequence of a commitment to justice and morality. Both essays were originally published in *Fraser's Magazine*.

Carlyle: *From* Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question

The West Indies, it appears, are short of labour; as indeed is very conceivable in those circumstances: where a Black man by working about half an hour a-day (such is the calculation) can supply himself, by aid of sun and soil, with as much pumpkin as will suffice, he is likely to be a little stiff to raise into hard work! Supply and demand, which, science says, should be brought to bear on him, have an uphill task of it with such a man. Strong sun supplies itself gratis, rich soil in those unpeopled or half-peopled regions almost gratis; these are *his* 'supply;' and half an hour a-day, directed upon these, will produce pumpkin which is his 'demand.' The fortunate Black man, very swiftly does he settle *his* account with supply and demand:—not so swiftly the less fortunate White man of these tropical localities. He himself cannot work;[1] and his Black neighbour, rich in pumpkin, is in no haste to help him. Sunk to the ears in pumpkin, imbibing saccharine juices, and much at his ease in the Creation, he can listen to the less fortunate white man's 'demand,' and take his own time in supplying it. Higher wages, massa; higher, for your cane-crop cannot wait; still higher,—till no conceivable opulence of cane-crop will cover such wages! In Demerara, as I read in the blue book[2] of last year, the cane-crop, far and wide, stands rotting; the fortunate black gentlemen, strong in their pumpkins, having all struck till the 'demand' rise a little. Sweet blighted lilies,[3] now getting up their heads again!

Science, however, has a remedy still. Since the demand is so pressing, and the supply so inadequate (equal in fact to *nothing* in some places, as appears), increase the supply; bring more Blacks into the labour-market,[4] then will the rate fall, says science. Not the least surprising part of our West Indian policy is this recipe of 'immigration;' of keeping down the labour-market in those islands by

importing new Africans to labour and live there. If the Africans that are already there could be made to lay down their pumpkins and labour for their living, there are already Africans enough. If the new Africans, after labouring a little, take to pumpkins like the others, what remedy is there? To bring in new and ever new Africans, say you, till pumpkins themselves grow dear; till the country is crowded with Africans; and black men there, like white men here, are forced by hunger to labour for their living? That will be a consummation. To have 'emancipated' the West Indies into a *Black Ireland*;[5] 'free' indeed, but an Ireland, and black! The world may yet see prodigies; and reality be stranger than a nightmare dream.

Our own white or sallow Ireland, sluttishly starving from age to age on its act-of-parliament 'freedom,' was hitherto the flower of mismanagement among the nations: but what will this be to a Negro Ireland, with pumpkins themselves fallen scarce like potatoes! Imagination cannot fathom such an object; the belly of Chaos never held the like. The human mind, in its wide wanderings, has not dreamt yet of such a 'freedom' as that will be. Towards that, if Exeter Hall[6] and science of supply and demand are to continue our guides in the matter, we are daily travelling, and even struggling, with loans of half-a-million and such-like, to accelerate ourselves.

Truly, my philanthropic friends, Exeter Hall Philanthropy is wonderful; and the Social Science—not a 'gay science,'[7] but a rueful —which finds the secret of this universe in 'supply-and-demand,' and reduces the duty of human governors to that of letting men alone, is also wonderful. Not a 'gay science,' I should say, like some we have heard of; no, a dreary, desolate, and indeed quite abject and distressing one; what we might call, by way of eminence, the *dismal science*. These two, Exeter Hall Philanthropy and the Dismal Science, led by any sacred cause of Black Emancipation, or the like, to fall in love and make a wedding of it,—will give birth to progenies and prodigies; dark extensive mooncalves,[8] unnameable abortions, wide-coiled monstrosities, such as the world has not seen hitherto!

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And first, with regard to the West Indies, it may be laid down as a principle, which no eloquence in Exeter Hall, or Westminster Hall,[9] or elsewhere, can invalidate or hide, except for a short time only, that no Black man who will not work according to what ability the gods have given him for working, has the smallest right to eat pumpkin, or to any fraction of land that will grow pumpkin, however plentiful such land may be; but has an indisputable and perpetual *right* to be compelled, by the real proprietors of said land, to do competent work for his living. This is the everlasting duty of all men, black or white, who are born into this world. To do competent work, to labour honestly according to the ability given them; for that and for no other purpose was each one of us sent into this world; and woe is to every man who, by friend or by foe, is prevented from fulfilling this the end of his being. That is the 'unhappy' lot; lot equally unhappy cannot otherwise be provided for man. Whatsoever prohibits or prevents a man from this his sacred appointment to labour while he lives on earth,—that, I say, is the man's deadliest enemy; and all men are called upon to do what is in their power or opportunity towards delivering him from it. If it be his own indolence that prevents and prohibits him, then his own indolence is the enemy he must be delivered from: and the first 'right' he has,—poor indolent blockhead, black or white, is, That every *un*prohibited man, whatsoever wiser, more industrious person may be passing that way, shall endeavour to 'emancipate' him from his indolence, and by some wise means, as I said, compel him to do the work he is fit for. This is the eternal law of nature for a man, my beneficent Exeter Hall friends; this, that he shall be permitted, encouraged, and if need be compelled to do what work the Maker of him has intended by the making of him for this world! Not that he should eat pumpkin with never such felicity in the West India Islands is, or can be, the blessedness of our black friend; but that he should do useful work there, according as the gifts have been bestowed on him for that. And his own happiness, and that of others round him, will alone be possible by his and their getting into such a relation that this can be permitted him, and in case of need that this can be compelled him. I

beg you to understand this; for you seem to have a little forgotten it, and there lie a thousand inferences in it, not quite useless for Exeter Hall, at present. The idle black man in the West Indies had not long since the right, and will again under better form, if it please Heaven, have the right (actually the first 'right of man'[1] for an indolent person) to be *compelled* to work as he was fit, and to *do* the Maker's will who had constructed him with such and such prefigurements of capability. And I incessantly pray Heaven, all men, the whitest alike and the blackest, the richest and the poorest, in other regions of the world, had attained precisely the same right, the divine right of being compelled (if 'permitted' will not answer) to do what work they are appointed for, and not to go idle another minute, in a life so short! Alas, we had then a perfect world; and the Millennium, and true 'Organization of Labour,'[2] and reign of complete blessedness, for all workers and men, had then arrived,—which in these our own poor districts of the Planet, as we all lament to know, it is very far from having yet done.

Let me suggest another consideration withal. West India Islands, still full of waste fertility, produce abundant pumpkins; pumpkins, however, you will please to observe, are not the sole requisite for human wellbeing. No: for a pig they are the one thing needful; but for a man they are only the first of several things needful. And now, as to the right of chief management in cultivating those West India lands; as to the 'right of property' so-called, and of doing what you like with your own? The question is abstruse enough. Who it may be that has a right to raise pumpkins and other produce on those Islands, perhaps none can, except temporarily, decide. The Islands are good withal for pepper, for sugar, for sago, arrowroot, for coffee, perhaps for cinnamon and precious spices; things far nobler than pumpkins; and leading towards commerces, arts, polities, and social developments, which alone are the noble product, where men (and not pigs with pumpkins) are the parties concerned! Well, all this fruit too, fruit spicy and commercial, fruit spiritual and celestial, so far beyond the merely pumpkinish and grossly terrene, lies in the West India lands: and the ultimate 'proprietorship' of them,—why, I

suppose, it will vest in him who can the *best* educe from them whatever of noble produce they were created fit for yielding. He, I compute, is the real 'Vicegerent of the Maker'[3] there; in him, better and better chosen, and not in another, is the 'property' vested by decree of Heaven's chancery itself!

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Any poor idle Black man, any idle White man, rich or poor, is a mere eye-sorrow to the State; a perpetual blister on the skin of the State. The State is taking measures, some of them rather extensive in Europe at this very time, and already as in Paris, Berlin, and elsewhere, rather tremendous measures, to *get* its rich white men set to work;[4] for alas, they also have long sat Negro-like up to the ears in pumpkin, regardless of 'work,' and of a world all going to waste for their idleness! Extensive measures, I say; and already (as, in all European lands, this scandalous Year of street-barricades and fugitive sham-kings exhibits) *tremendous* measures; for the thing is instant to be done.

The thing must be done everywhere; *must* is the word. Only it is so terribly difficult to do; and will take generations yet, this of getting our rich European white men 'set to work!' But yours in the West Indies, my obscure Black friends, your work, and the getting of you set to it, is a simple affair; and by diligence, the West Indian legislatures, and Royal governors, setting their faces fairly to the problem, will get it done. You are not 'slaves' now; nor do I wish, if it can be avoided, to see you slaves again: but decidedly you will have to be servants to those that are born *wiser* than you, that are born lords of you,—servants to the whites, if they *are* (as what mortal can doubt they are?) born wiser than you. That, you may depend on it, my obseure Black friends, is and was always the Law of the World, for you and for all men: To *be* servants, the more foolish of us to the more wise; and only sorrow, futility and disappointment will betide both, till both in some approximate degree get to conform to the same. Heaven's laws are not repealable by Earth, however Earth may try,—and it has been trying hard, in some directions, of late! I

say, no well-being, and in the end no being at all, will be possible for you or us, if the law of Heaven is not complied with. And if 'slave' mean essentially 'servant hired for life,'—for life, or by a contract of long continuance and not easily dissoluble,—I ask, Whether, in in all human things, the 'contract of long continuance' is not precisely the contract to be desired, were the right terms once found for it? Servant hired for life, were the right terms once found, which I do not pretend they are, seems to me much preferable to servant hired for the month, or by contract dissoluble in a day. An ill-situated servant, that;—servant grown to be *nomadic*; between whom and his master a good relation *cannot* easily spring up!

1849

Endnotes

- Note 1: Carlyle here is repeating a common belief that White men are physically unsuited to labor in the tropics.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Official publication of the British government. "Demerara": colony in British Guiana.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Reference to Matthew 6:28: Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In 1847–48, Parliament approved a loan of £500,000 to encourage African labor to emigrate to the West Indies.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The famine in Ireland (1845–52) resulted in approximately 1 million deaths and approximately 2 million people emigrating.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The location of many meetings on progressive causes, including abolitionism.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The science of poetry, by contrast with what Carlyle calls the "dismal science" of economics.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Foolish people.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The location of Parliament.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: Reference to Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* (1791), which posits the existence of certain inalienable human rights.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A term for trade unions. "Millennium": thousand-year reign of peace in the Bible.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Earthly representative of God.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Carlyle is referring to the Revolutions of 1848, which took place across Europe and sought to replace monarchical governmental structures with democratic ones.Return to reference 4

Mill: *From* The Negro Question

> [If all the meetings at Exeter Hall be not presided over by strictly impartial chairmen, they ought to be. We shall set an example to our pious brethren in this respect, by giving publicity to the following letter. Our readers have now both sides of the question before them, and can form their own opinions upon it. —Editor.]

To the Editor of Fraser's Magazine.

Sir,

Your last month's Number[1] contains a speech against the 'rights of Negroes,' the doctrines and spirit of which ought not to pass without remonstrance. The author issues his opinions, or rather ordinances, under imposing auspices; no less than those of the 'immortal gods.' 'The Powers,' 'the Destinies,' announce through him, not only what *will* be, but what *shall* be done; what they 'have decided upon, passed their eternal act of parliament for.' This is speaking 'as one having authority;' but authority from whom? If by the quality of the message we may judge of those who sent it, *not* from any powers to whom just or good men acknowledge allegiance. This so-called 'eternal Act of Parliament' is no new law, but the old law of the strongest,—a law against which the great teachers of mankind have in all ages protested:—it is the law of force and cunning; the law that whoever is more powerful than another, is 'born lord' of that other, the other being born his 'servant,' who must be 'compelled to work' for him by 'beneficent whip,' if 'other methods avail not.' I see nothing divine in this injunction. If 'the gods' will this, it is the first duty of human beings to resist such gods. Omnipotent these 'gods' are *not*, for powers which demand *human* tyranny and injustice cannot accomplish their purpose unless human beings cooperate. The history of human improvement is the record of a struggle by

which inch after inch of ground has been wrung from these maleficent powers, and more and more of human life rescued from the iniquitous dominion of the law of might. Much, very much of this work still remains to do; but the progress made in it is the best and greatest achievement yet performed by mankind, and it was hardly to be expected at this period of the world that we should be enjoined, by way of a great reform in human affairs, to begin *un*doing it.

The age, it appears, is ill with a most pernicious disease, which infects all its proceedings, and of which the conduct of this country in regard to the Negroes is a prominent symptom—the Disease of Philanthropy. 'Sunk in deep froth-oceans of Benevolence, Fraternity, Emancipation-principle, Christian Philanthropy, and other most amiable-looking, but most baseless, and, in the end, baleful and all-bewildering jargon,' the product of 'hearts left destitute of any earnest guidance, and disbelieving that there ever was any, Christian or heathen,' the 'human species' is 'reduced to believe in rose-pink sentimentalism alone.' On this alleged condition of the human species I shall have something to say presently. But I must first set my anti-philanthropic opponent right on a matter of fact. He entirely misunderstands the great national revolt of the conscience of this country against slavery and the slave-trade,[2] if he supposes it to have been an affair of sentiment. It depended no more on humane feelings than any cause which so irresistibly appealed to them must necessarily do. Its first victories were gained while the lash yet ruled uncontested in the barrack-yard and the rod in schools, and while men were still hanged by dozens for stealing to the value of forty shillings. It triumphed because it was the cause of justice; and, in the estimation of the great majority of its supporters, of religion. Its originators and leaders were persons of a stern sense of moral obligation, who, in the spirit of the religion of their time, seldom spoke much of benevolence and philanthropy, but often of duty, crime, and sin. For nearly two centuries had negroes, many thousands annually, been seized by force or treachery and carried off to the West Indies to be worked to death, literally to death; for it

was the received maxim, the acknowledged dictate of good economy, to wear them out quickly and import more. In this fact every other possible cruelty, tyranny, and wanton oppression was by implication included. And the motive on the part of the slave-owners was the love of gold; or, to speak more truly, of vulgar and puerile ostentation. I have yet to learn that anything more detestable than this has been done by human beings towards human beings in any part of the earth. It is a mockery to talk of comparing it with Ireland. And this went on, not, like Irish beggary, because England had not the skill to prevent it,—not merely by the sufferance, but by the laws of the English nation. At last, however, there were found men, in growing number, who determined not to rest until the iniquity was extirpated; who made the destruction of it as much the business and end of their lives, as ordinary men make their private interests; who would not be content with softening its hideous features, and making it less intolerable to the sight, but would stop at nothing short of its utter and irrevocable extinction. I am so far from seeing anything contemptible in this resolution, that, in my sober opinion, the persons who formed and executed it deserve to be numbered among those, not numerous in any age, who have led noble lives according to their lights, and laid on mankind a debt of permanent gratitude.

After fifty years of toil and sacrifice, the object was accomplished, and the negroes, freed from the despotism of their fellow-beings, were left to themselves, and to the chances which the arrangements of existing society provide for those who have no resource but their labour. These chances proved favourable to them, and, for the last ten years, they afford the unusual spectacle of a labouring class whose labour bears so high a price that they can exist in comfort on the wages of a comparatively small quantity of work. This, to the ex-slave-owners, is an inconvenience; but I have not yet heard that any of them has been reduced to beg his bread, or even to dig for it, as the negro, however scandalously he enjoys himself, still must: a carriage or some other luxury the less, is in most cases, I believe, the limit of their privations—no very hard

measure of retributive justice; those who have had tyrannical power taken away from them, may think themselves fortunate if they come so well off; at all events, it is an embarrassment out of which the nation is not called on to help them: if they cannot continue to realize their large incomes without more labourers, let them find them, and bring them from where they can best be procured, only not by force. Not so thinks your anti-philanthropic contributor. That negroes should exist, and enjoy existence, on so little work, is a scandal in his eyes, worse than their former slavery. It must be put a stop to at any price. He does not 'wish to see' them slaves again 'if it can be avoided;' but 'decidedly' they 'will have to be servants,' 'servants to the whites,' 'compelled to labour,' and 'not to go idle another minute. 'Black Quaabee'[3] up to the ears in pumpkins, and 'working about half an hour a day,' is to him the abomination of abominations. I have so serious a quarrel with him about principles, that I have no time to spare for his facts; but let me remark, how easily he takes for grauted those which fit his case. Because he reads in some blue-book of a strike for wages in Demerara,[4] such as he may read of any day in Manchester,[5] he draws a picture of negro inactivity, copied from the wildest prophecies of the slavery party before emancipation. If the negroes worked no more than 'half an hour a day,' would the sugar crops, in all except notoriously bad seasons, be so considerable, so little diminished from what they were in the time of slavery, as is proved by the Customhouse returns? But it is not the facts of the question, so much as the moralities of it, that I care to dispute with your contributor.

A black man working no more than your contributor affirms that they work, is, he says, 'an eye-sorrow,' a 'blister on the skin of the state,' and many other things equally disagreeable; to *work* being the grand duty of man. 'To do competent work, to labour honestly according to the ability given them; for that, and for no other purpose, was each one of us sent into this world.' Whoever prevents him from this his 'sacred appointment to labour while he lives on earth' is 'his deadliest enemy.' If it be 'his own indolence' that prevents him, 'the first *right* he has' is that all wiser and more

industrious persons shall, 'by some wise means, compel him to do the work he is fit for.' Why not at once say that, by 'some wise means,' every thing should be made right in the world? While we are about it, wisdom may as well be suggested as the remedy for all evils, as for one only. Your contributor incessantly prays Heaven that all persons, black and white, may be put in possession of this 'divine right of being compelled, if permitted will not serve, to do what work they are appointed for.' But as this cannot be conveniently managed just yet, he will begin with the blacks, and will make them work *for* certain whites, those whites *not* working at all; that so 'the eternal purpose and supreme will' may be fulfilled, and 'injustice,' which is 'for ever accursed,' may cease.

This pet theory of your contributor about work, we all know well enough,[6] though some persons might not be prepared for so bold an application of it. Let me say a few words on this 'gospel of work'—which, to my mind, as justly deserves the name of a cant as any of those which he has opposed, while the truth it contains is immeasurably farther from being the whole truth than that contained in the words Benevolence, Fraternity, or any other of his catalogue of contemptibilities. To give it a rational meaning, it must first be known what he means by work. Does work mean every thing which people *do*? No; or he would not reproach people with doing no work. Does it mean laborious exertion? No; for many a day spent in killing game, includes more muscular fatigue than a day's ploughing. Does it mean *useful* exertion? But your contributor always scoffs at the idea of utility. Does he mean that all persons ought to earn their living? But some earn their living by doing nothing, and some by doing mischief; and the negroes, whom he despises, still do earn by labour the 'pumpkins' they consume and the finery they wear.

Work, I imagine, is not a good in itself. There is nothing laudable in work for work's sake. To work voluntarily for a worthy object is laudable; but what constitutes a worthy object? On this matter, the oracle of which your contributor is the prophet has never yet been prevailed on to declare itself. He revolves in an eternal circle round

the idea of work, as if turning up the earth, or driving a shuttle or a quill, were ends in themselves, and the ends of human existence. Yet, even in the case of the most sublime service to humanity, it is not because it is work that it is worthy; the worth lies in the service itself, and in the will to render it—the noble feelings of which it is the fruit; and if the nobleness of will is proved by other evidence than work, as for instance by danger or sacrifice, there is the same worthiness. While we talk only of work, and not of its object, we are far from the root of the matter; or if it may be called the root, it is a root without flower or fruit.

In the present case, it seems, a noble object means 'spices.' 'The gods wish, besides pumpkins, that spices and valuable products be grown in their West Indies'—the 'noble elements of cinnamon, sugar, coffee, pepper black and grey,' 'things far nobler than pumpkins.' Why so? Is what supports life, inferior in dignity to what merely gratifies the sense of taste? Is it the verdict of the 'immortal gods' that pepper is noble, freedom (even freedom from the lash) contemptible? But spices lead 'towards commerces, arts, polities, and social developements.' Perhaps so; but of what sort? When they must be produced by slaves, the 'polities and social developements' they lead to are such as the world, I hope, will not choose to be cursed with much longer.

The worth of work does not surely consist in its leading to other work, and so on to work upon work without end. On the contrary, the multiplication of work, for purposes not worth caring about, is one of the evils of our present condition. When justice and reason shall be the rule of human affairs, one of the first things to which we may expect them to be applied is the question, How many of the so-called luxuries, conveniences, refinements, and ornaments of life, are *worth* the labour which must be undergone as the condition of producing them? The beautifying of existence is as worthy and useful an object as the sustaining of it; but only a vitiated taste can see any such result in those fopperies of so-called civilization, which myriads of hands are now occupied and lives wasted in providing. In opposition to the 'gospel of work,' I would assert the gospel of

leisure, and maintain that human beings *cannot* rise to the finer attributes of their nature compatibly with a life filled with labour. I do not include under the name labour such work, if work it be called, as is done by writers and afforders of 'guidance,' an occupation which, let alone the vanity of the thing, cannot be called by the same name with the real labour, the exhausting, stiffening, stupefying toil of many kinds of agricultural and manufacturing labourers. To reduce very greatly the quantity of work required to carry on existence, is as needful as to distribute it more equally; and the progress of science, and the increasing ascendancy of justice and good sense, tend to this result.

There is a portion of work rendered necessary by the fact of each person's existence: no one could exist unless work, to a certain amount, were done either by or for him. Of this each person is bound, in justice, to perform his share; and society has an incontestable right to declare to every one, that if he work not, at this work of necessity, neither shall he eat. Society has not enforced this right, having in so far postponed the rule of justice to other considerations. But there is an ever-growing demand that it be enforced, so soon as any endurable plan can be devised for the purpose. If this experiment is to be tried in the West Indies, let it be tried impartially; and let the whole produce belong to those who do the work which produces it. We would not have black labourers compelled to grow spices which they do not want, and white proprietors who do not work at all exchanging the spices for houses in Belgrave Square.[7] We would not withhold from the whites, any more than from the blacks, the 'divine right' of being compelled to labour. Let them have exactly the same share in the produce that they have in the work. If they do not like this, let them remain as they are, so long as they are permitted, and make the best of supply and demand.

1850

Endnotes

- Note 1: Reference to Carlyle's "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question," above.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The slave trade was abolished in 1807; slavery was abolished in 1833; and the "apprenticeship" system that replaced slavery in the West Indies was eliminated in 1838.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A sometimes although not invariably derogatory term for an Indigenous person of the West Indies.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A colony in British Guiana. "Blue-book": official publication of the British government.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Industrial center in England.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Carlyle introduced his gospel of work in *Past and Present* (1843).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Fashionable residential neighborhood in London.Return to reference 7

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

Although an American author writing about slavery in the United States, Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) was one of the most popular and influential writers (1852) in England in the nineteenth century. Her most famous novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, sold two hundred thousand copies in England when it first appeared. Readers found Stowe's sentimental depictions of the consequences of slavery for enslaved women and children especially powerful. The scene below opens with a debate between Senator and Mrs. Bird over the morality of the Fugitive Slave Act (1850) that required the seizure and return of enslaved people who had escaped their enslavers. Their conversation is interrupted by the arrival of Eliza, who has run away with her young son, Harry, to prevent him from being sold away from her.

From Uncle Tom's Cabin

"Now, John, I want to know if you think such a law as that[1] is right and Christian?"

"You won't shoot me, now, Mary, if I say I do!"

"I never could have thought it of you, John; you didn't vote for it?"

"Even so, my fair politician."

"You ought to be ashamed, John! Poor, homeless, houseless creatures! It's a shameful, wicked, abominable law, and I'll break it, for one, the first time I get a chance; and I hope I *shall* have a chance, I do! Things have got to a pretty pass, if a woman can't give a warm supper and a bed to poor, starving creatures, just because they are slaves, and have been abused and oppressed all their lives, poor things!"

"But, Mary, just listen to me. Your feelings are all quite right, dear, and interesting, and I love you for them; but, then, dear, we mustn't suffer our feelings to run away with our judgment; you must consider it's not a matter of private feeling,—there are great public interests involved,—there is such a state of public agitation rising, that we must put aside our private feelings."

"Now, John, I don't know anything about politics, but I can read my Bible; and there I see that I must feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and comfort the desolate; and that Bible I mean to follow."

"But in cases where your doing so would involve a great public evil—"

"Obeying God never brings on public evils. I know it can't. It's always safest, all round, to *do as He* bids us."

"Now, listen to me, Mary, and I can state to you a very clear argument, to show—"

"O, nonsense, John! you can talk all night, but you wouldn't do it. I put it to you, John,—would *you* now turn away a poor, shivering,

hungry creature from your door, because he was a runaway? *Would* you, now?"

Now, if the truth must be told, our senator had the misfortune to be a man who had a particularly humane and accessible nature, and turning away anybody that was in trouble never had been his forte; and what was worse for him in this particular pinch of the argument was, that his wife knew it, and, of course, was making an assault on rather an indefensible point. So he had recourse to the usual means of gaining time for such cases made and provided; he said "ahem," and coughed several times, took out his pocket-handkerchief, and began to wipe his glasses. Mrs. Bird, seeing the defenceless condition of the enemy's territory, had no more conscience than to push her advantage.

"I should like to see you doing that, John—I really should! Turning a woman out of doors in a snow-storm, for instance; or, may be you'd take her up and put her in jail, wouldn't you? You would make a great hand at that!"

"Of course, it would be a very painful duty," began Mr. Bird, in a moderate tone.

"Duty, John! don't use that word! You know it isn't a duty—it can't be a duty! If folks want to keep their slaves from running away, let 'em treat 'em well,—that's my doctrine. If I had slaves (as I hope I never shall have), I'd risk their wanting to run away from me, or you either, John. I tell you folks don't run away when they are happy: and when they do run, poor creatures! they suffer enough with cold and hunger and fear, without everybody's turning against them; and, law or no law, I never will, so help me God!"

"Mary! Mary! My dear, let me reason with you."

"I hate reasoning, John,—especially reasoning on such subjects. There's a way you political folks have of coming round and round a plain right thing; and you don't believe in it yourselves, when it comes to practice. I know *you* well enough, John. You don't believe it's right any more than I do; and you wouldn't do it any sooner than I."

At this critical juncture, old Cudjoe, the black man-of-all-work, put his head in at the door, and wished "Missis would come into the kitchen;" and our senator, tolerably relieved, looked after his little wife with a whimsical mixture of amusement and vexation, and, seating himself in the arm-chair, began to read the papers.

After a moment, his wife's voice was heard at the door, in a quick, earnest tone,—"John! John! I do wish you'd come here, a moment."

He laid down his paper, and went into the kitchen, and started, quite amazed at the sight that presented itself:—A young and slender woman, with garments torn and frozen, with one shoe gone, and the stocking torn away from the cut and bleeding foot, was laid back in a deadly swoon upon two chairs. There was the impress of the despised race on her face, yet none could help feeling its mournful and pathetic beauty, while its stony sharpness, its cold, fixed, deathly aspect, struck a solemn chill over him. He drew his breath short, and stood in silence. His wife, and their only colored domestic, old Aunt Dinah, were busily engaged in restorative measures; while old Cudjoe had got the boy on his knee, and was busy pulling off his shoes and stockings, and chafing his little cold feet.

"Sure, now, if she an't a sight to behold!" said old Dinah, compassionately; " 'pears like 'twas the heat that made her faint. She was tol'able peart when she cum in, and asked if she couldn't warm herself here a spell; and I was just a askin' her where she cum from, and she fainted right down. Never done much hard work, guess, by the looks of her hands."

"Poor creature!" said Mrs. Bird, compassionately, as the woman slowly unclosed her large, dark eyes, and looked vacantly at her. Suddenly an expression of agony crossed her face, and she sprang up, saying, "O, my Harry! Have they got him?"

The boy, at this, jumped from Cudjoe's knee, and, running to her side, put up his arms. "O, he's here! he's here!" she exclaimed.

"O, ma'am!" said she, wildly, to Mrs. Bird, "do protect us! don't let them get him!"

“Nobody shall hurt you here, poor woman,” said Mrs. Bird, encouragingly. “You are safe; don’t be afraid.”

1851–52

Endnotes

- Note 1: That is, the Fugitive Slave Act (1850).Return to reference 1

JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE

The historian James Anthony Froude (1818–1894) came to fame as the author of a twelve-volume *History of England* (1856–70) and the biography of his mentor, Thomas Carlyle (1882–1884). Inspired by his visits to South Africa to explore other parts of the empire, he toured British possessions in the Caribbean in the winter of 1886–87 and there gathered information for *The English in the West Indies* (1888), in which he expressed his belief that the colonies populated by non-White people were not suited to self-rule. In the following selection he focuses on his travels in Trinidad, a Caribbean island that passed from Spanish to British control near the end of the eighteenth century.

From The English in the West Indies

Trinidad is not one of our oldest possessions, but we had held it long enough for the old planter civilisation to take root and grow, and our road led us through jungles of flowering shrubs which were running wild over what had been once cultivated estates. Stranger still (for one associates colonial life instinctively with what is new and modern), we came at one place on an avenue of vast trees, at the end of which stood the ruins of a mansion of some great man of the departed order. Great man he must have been, for there was a gateway half crumbled away on which were his crest and shield in stone, with supporters on either side, like the Baron of Bradwardine's Bears;[1] fallen now like them, but unlike them never, I fear, to be set up again. The Anglo-West Indians, like the English gentry in Ireland, were a fine race of men in their day, and perhaps the improving them off the earth has been a less beneficial process in either case than we are in the habit of supposing.

Entering among the hills we came on their successors. In Trinidad there are 18,000 freeholders, most of them negroes and representatives of the old slaves. Their cabins are spread along the road on either side, overhung with bread-fruit trees, tamarinds, calabash trees, out of which they make their cups and water jugs. The luscious granadilla climbs among the branches; plantains throw their cool shade over the doors; oranges and limes and citrons perfume the air, and droop their boughs under the weight of their golden burdens. There were yams in the gardens and cows in the paddocks, and cocoa bushes loaded with purple or yellow pods. Children played about in swarms, in happy idleness and abundance, with schools, too, at intervals, and an occasional Catholic chapel, for the old religion prevails in Trinidad, never having been disturbed. What form could human life assume more charming than that which we were now looking on? Once more, the earth does not contain any peasantry so well off, so well cared for, so happy, so sleek and

contented as the sons and daughters of the emancipated slaves in the English West Indian Islands. Sugar may fail the planter, but cocoa, which each peasant can grow with small effort for himself, does not fail and will not. He may 'better his condition,' if he has any such ambition, without stirring beyond his own ground, and so far, perhaps, his ambition may extend, if it is not turned off upon politics. Even the necessary evils of the tropics are not many or serious. His skin is proof against mosquitoes. There are snakes in Trinidad as there were snakes in Eden. 'Plenty snakes,' said one of them who was at work in his garden, 'plenty snakes, but no bitee.' As to costume, he would prefer the costume of innocence if he was allowed. Clothes in such a climate are superfluous for warmth, and to the minds of the negroes, unconscious as they are of shame, superfluous for decency.

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We made several similar small expeditions into the settled parts of the neighbourhood, seeing always (whatever else we saw) the boundless happiness of the black race. Under the rule of England in these islands the two million of these poor brothers-in-law of ours are the most perfectly contented specimens of the human race to be found upon the planet. Even Schopenhauer,[2] could he have known them, would have admitted that there were some of us who were not hopelessly wretched. If happiness be the satisfaction of every conscious desire, theirs is a condition which admits of no improvement: were they independent, they might quarrel among themselves, and the weaker become the bondmen[3] of the stronger; under the beneficent despotism of the English Government, which knows no difference of colour and permits no oppression, they can sleep, lounge, and laugh away their lives as they please, fearing no danger. If they want money, work and wages are waiting for them. No one can say what may be before them hereafter. The powers which envy human beings too perfect felicity may find ways one day of disturbing the West Indian negro; but so long as the English rule continues, he may be assured of the same tranquil existence.

As life goes he has been a lucky mortal. He was taken away from Dahomey and Ashantee[4]—to be a slave indeed, but a slave to a less cruel master than he would have found at home. He had a bad time of it occasionally, and the plantation whip and the branding irons are not all dreams, yet his owner cared for him at least as much as he cared for his cows and his horses. Kind usage to animals is more economical than barbarity, and Englishmen in the West Indies were rarely inhuman. Lord Rodney[5] says:

'I have been often in all the West India Islands, and I have often made my observations on the treatment of the negro slaves, and can aver that I never knew the least cruelty inflicted on them, but that in general they lived better than the honest day-labouring man in England, without doing a fourth part of his work in a day, and I am fully convinced that the negroes in our islands are better provided for and live better than when in Guinea.'[6]

Rodney, it is true, was a man of facts and was defective in sentiment. Let us suppose him wrong, let us believe the worst horrors of the slave trade or slave usage as fluent tongue of missionary or demagogue has described them, yet nevertheless, when we consider what the lot of common humanity has been and is, we shall be dishonest if we deny that the balance has been more than redressed; and the negroes who were taken away out of Africa, as compared with those who were left at home, were as the 'elect to salvation,'[7] who after a brief purgatory are secured an eternity of blessedness. The one condition is the maintenance of the authority of the English crown. The whites of the islands cannot equitably rule them. They have not shaken off the old traditions. If, for the sake of theory or to shirk responsibility, we force them to govern themselves, the state of Hayti[8] stands as a ghastly example of the condition into which they will then inevitably fall. If we persist, we shall be sinning against light—the clearest light that was ever given in such affairs. The most hardened believers in the regenerating effects of political liberty cannot be completely blind to the ruin which the infliction of it would necessarily bring upon the race for whose interests they pretend particularly to care.

Endnotes

- Note 1: A reference to Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814). The baron's battlements are adorned with carved stone bears that are torn down during the novel and restored to their original position by its end.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), German philosopher who emphasized the tragedy of life.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, bondsmen, slaves.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Also Asante, Ashanti (now part of Ghana), like Dahomey an area of western Africa that profited from the slave trade in the 18th and 19th centuries.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: George Brydges Rodney (1719–1792), British admiral who commanded several naval campaigns against Britain's rival colonial powers in the West Indies.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Region of western Africa involved in the slave trade until the middle of the 19th century (the transatlantic slave trade had been outlawed by Britain and the United States in 1807 and 1808, respectively).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In Calvinist Protestantism, the "elect" are those people chosen by God to be saved from eternal damnation.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Haiti, which gained its independence following a slave revolt that began in 1791. Through much of the 19th century, it experienced rapid and sometimes violent changes of leadership.Return to reference 8

JOHN JACOB THOMAS

John Jacob Thomas (ca. 1840–1889), a descendant of enslaved people, was born into poverty on the Caribbean island of Trinidad. Primarily a self-educated intellectual, he became a linguist, folklorist, teacher, civil servant, editor, and author. His *Froudacity* (1889) is a book-length rebuttal of Froude's *The English in the West Indies* (1888), challenging its assumptions about the inferiority of non-White people and exposing its mistakes and its misrepresentations of his native land.

From Froudacity

From *Social Revolution*

Never was the Knight of La Mancha[1] more convinced of his imaginary mission to redress the wrongs of the world than Mr. James Anthony Froude seems to be of his ability to alter the course of events, especially those bearing on the destinies of the Negro in the British West Indies. The doctrinaire style of his utterances, his sublime indifference as to what Negro opinion and feelings may be, on account of his revelations, are uniquely charming. In that portion of his book headed "Social Revolution" our author, with that mixture of frankness and cynicism which is so dear to the soul of the British *esprit fort*[2] of today, has challenged a comparison between British Colonial policy on the one hand, and the Colonial policy of France and Spain on the other. This he does with an evident recklessness that his approval of Spain and France involves a definite condemnation of his own country. However, let us hear him:—

"The English West Indies, like other parts of the world, are going through a silent revolution. Elsewhere the revolution, as we hope, is a transition state, a new birth; a passing away of what is old and worn out, that a fresh and healthier order may rise in its place. In the West Indies the most sanguine of mortals will find it difficult to entertain any such *hope at all*."

As Mr. Froude is speaking dogmatically here of *his*, or rather *our*, West Indies, let us hear him as he proceeds:—

"We have been a ruling power there for two hundred and fifty years; the *whites whom we planted as our representatives* are drifting into ruin, and they regard England and England's policy as the principal cause of it. The *blacks whom, in a fit of virtuous benevolence*, we emancipated, do not feel *particularly obliged to us.*

They think, if they think at all, that they were ill-treated originally, and have received no more than was due to them."

Thus far. Now, as to "the *whites* whom we planted as our *representatives*," and who, Mr. Froude avers, are drifting into ruin, we confess to a total ignorance of their whereabouts in these islands in this jubilee year of Negro Emancipation.[3] Of the *representatives* of Britain immediately before and after Emancipation we happen to know something, which, on the testimony of Englishmen, Mr. Froude will be made quite welcome to before our task is ended. With respect to Mr. Froude's statement as to the ingratitude of the emancipated Blacks, if it is aimed at the slaves who were actually set free, it is utterly untrue; for no class of persons, in their humble and artless way, are more attached to the Queen's majesty, whom they regard as incarnating in her gracious person the benevolence which Mr. Froude so jauntily scoffs at. But if our censor's remark under this head is intended for the present generation of Blacks, it is a pure and simple absurdity. What are *we* Negroes of the present day to be grateful for to the "us," personified by Mr. Froude and the Colonial Office exportations? We really believe, from what we know of Englishmen, that very few indeed would regard Mr. Froude's reproach otherwise than as a palpable adding of insult to injury. Obliged to "us," indeed! Why, Mr. Froude, who speaks of us as dogs and horses, suggests that the same kindliness of treatment that secures the attachment of those noble brutes would have the same result in our case. With the same consistency that marks his utterances throughout his book, he tells his readers "that there is no original or congenital difference between the capacity of the White and the Negro races." He adds, too, significantly: "With the *same chances* and with the same *treatment*, I believe that distinguished men would be produced *equally* from *both* races." After this truthful testimony, which Pelion upon Ossa[4] of evidence has confirmed, does Mr. Froude, in the fatuity of his skin-pride, believe that educated men, worthy of the name, would be otherwise than resentful, if not disgusted, at being shunted out of bread in their own native land, which their parents' labours and taxes have made desirable, in order

to afford room to blockheads, vulgarians, or worse, imported from beyond the seas? Does Mr. Froude's scorn of the Negroes' skin extend, inconsistently on his part, to their intelligence and feelings also? And if so, what has the Negro to care—if let alone and not wantonly thwarted in his aspirations? It sounds queer, not to say unnatural and scandalous, that Englishmen should in these days of light be the champions of injustice towards their fellow-subjects, not for any intellectual or moral disqualification, but on the simple account of the darker skin of those who are to be assailed and thwarted in their life's career and aspirations. Really, are we to be grateful that the colour difference should be made the basis and justification of the dastardly denials of justice, social, intellectual, and moral, which have characterized the *régime* of those who Mr. Froude boasts were left to be the representatives of Britain's morality and fair play?

1889

Endnotes

- Note 1: Don Quixote, the title character of Miguel de Cervantes' novel (1605, 1615); the name became synonymous with foolish, self-deluded idealism.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Freethinker (French).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The fifty-year anniversary of the freeing of enslaved people in the British West Indies. Slavery was abolished in British colonial possessions in 1833, but the formerly enslaved working on plantations were apprenticed to their past owners until 1838.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, mountains. The proverbial phrase "to heap Ossa upon Pelion" derives from Greek mythology and the unsuccessful attempt of the giants to scale Olympus and threaten the gods by stacking one mountain on top of the other.Return to reference 4

India: The "Jewel in the Crown"

Although we often tend to think of "empire" and "imperialism" as the work of governments, in the case of the British Empire, much of the groundwork was laid by the privately owned British East India Company. The EIC was incorporated in 1600 as a trading company operating around the Indian Ocean (the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia) for the purpose of exporting valuable commodities such as spices, tea, dyes, opium, and silk. However, "trade" quickly came to be bound up with politics and territorial control; by the mid-eighteenth century, the EIC had effectively seized control of much of India and parts of Southeast Asia. EIC rule facilitated trade, but it also enabled the levying of disabling taxes and created a fertile field for exploitation by its employees.

The company's trade monopoly with India was abolished by the Charter Act of 1813 (and with China in 1833), but its control over India did not end until the Indian Uprising of 1857 led the British government to take over its functions. The British Raj (or British governmental control of India) lasted from 1858 until 1947, when the country was partitioned into India and Pakistan with devastating consequences.

The motives for imperialism in India were always clearly defined in terms of profit. At the same time, as the work of Thomas Babington Macaulay makes clear in this section, and that of John Stuart Mill and Rudyard Kipling illuminate elsewhere in this volume, some agents of empire also saw their mission in terms one might call philanthropic: assuming their own always to be the superior culture, they took for granted the desirability of seeking to diffuse it as widely as possible.

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

The historian, essayist, and parliamentarian Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859) served as a member of the Supreme Council of the East India Company from 1834 to 1838. In that capacity he oversaw major educational and legal reforms. His "Minute on Indian Education," or official memorandum, was written as a response to those council members who believed that Indian students should continue to be educated in Sanskrit and Persian as well as in English; Macaulay's party carried the argument.

Macaulay's dismissiveness regarding India's supposed lack of literature, history, or scientific knowledge may be difficult to read. At the same time, it is worth noting the differences between his arrogant assumption of the superiority of British culture and the "scientific" racism that became prevalent toward the end of the century. Macaulay does not question the desirability of making Indians into Englishmen in everything but "blood and color"; he also does not doubt the viability of doing so. Both the English language and English culture are available to all. Later racisms rejected any such notion: for them, race determines not just skin color but intellectual and even moral capacity.

From Minute on Indian Education

We now come to the gist of the matter. We have a fund to be employed as government shall direct for the intellectual improvement of the people of this country. The simple question is, what is the most useful way of employing it?

All parties seem to be agreed on one point, that the dialects commonly spoken among the natives of this part of India contain neither literary nor scientific information, and are, moreover, so poor and rude that, until they are enriched from some other quarter, it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them. It seems to be admitted on all sides, that the intellectual improvement of those classes of the people who have the means of pursuing higher studies can, at present, be effected only by means of some language not vernacular amongst them.

What then shall that language be? One half of the committee maintain that it should be the English. The other half strongly recommend the Arabic and Sanscrit. The whole question seems to me to be, which language is the best worth knowing?

I have no knowledge of either Sanscrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanscrit works. I have conversed both here and at home with men distinguished by their proficiency in the Eastern tongues. I am quite ready to take the Oriental learning at the valuation of the Orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of the Western literature is, indeed, fully admitted by those members of the committee who support the Oriental plan of education.

It will hardly be disputed, I suppose, that the department of literature in which the Eastern writers stand highest is poetry. And I

certainly never met with any Orientalist who ventured to maintain that the Arabic and Sanscrit poetry could be compared to that of the great European nations. But when we pass from works of imagination to works in which facts are recorded, and general principles investigated, the superiority of the Europeans becomes absolutely immeasurable. It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say, that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanscrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgements used at preparatory schools in England. In every branch of physical or moral philosophy, the relative position of the two nations is nearly the same.

How, then, stands the case? We have to educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother-tongue. We must teach them some foreign language. The claims of our own language it is hardly necessary to recapitulate. It stands pre-eminent even among the languages of the West. It abounds with works of imagination not inferior to the noblest which Greece has bequeathed to us; with models of every species of eloquence; with historical compositions which, considered merely as narratives, have seldom been surpassed, and which, considered as vehicles of ethical and political instruction, have never been equalled; with just and lively representations of human life and human nature; with the most profound speculations on metaphysics, morals, government, jurisprudence, and trade; with full and correct information respecting every experimental science which tends to preserve the health, to increase the comfort, or to expand the intellect of man. Whoever knows that language has ready access to all the vast intellectual wealth which all the wisest nations of the earth have created and hoarded in the course of ninety generations. It may safely be said, that the literature now extant in that language is of far greater value than all the literature which three hundred years ago was extant in all the languages of the world together. Nor is this all: In India, English is the language spoken by the ruling class. It is spoken by the higher class of natives at the seats of government. It is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the East.

It is the language of two great European communities which are rising, the one in the South of Africa, the other in Australasia; communities which are every year becoming more important, and more closely connected with our Indian empire. Whether we look at the intrinsic value of our literature, or at the particular situation of this country, we shall see the strongest reason to think that, of all foreign tongues, the English tongue is that which would be the most useful to our native subjects.

The question now before us, is simply whether, when it is in our power to teach this language, we shall teach languages in which, by universal confession, there are no books on any subject which deserve to be compared to our own; whether, when we can teach European science, we shall teach systems which, by universal confession, whenever they differ from those of Europe, differ for the worse; and whether, when we can patronise sound philosophy and true history, we shall countenance, at the public expense, medical doctrines, which would disgrace an English farrier;—astronomy, which would move laughter in girls at an English boarding-school,—history, abounding with kings thirty feet high, and reigns thirty thousand years long,—and geography, made up of seas of treacle and seas of butter.

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But there is yet another argument which seems even more untenable. It is said that the Sanscrit and Arabic are the languages in which the Sacred books of a hundred millions of people are written, and that they are, on that account, entitled to peculiar encouragement. Assuredly it is the duty of the British government in India to be not only tolerant, but neutral, on all religious questions. But to encourage the study of a literature admitted to be of small intrinsic value, only because that literature inculcates the most serious errors on the most important subjects, is a course hardly reconcileable with reason, with morality, or even with that very neutrality which ought, as we all agree, to be sacredly preserved. It is confessed that a language is barren of useful knowledge. We are

to teach it because it is fruitful of monstrous superstitions. We are to teach false history, false astronomy, false medicine, because we find them in company with a false religion. We abstain, and I trust shall always abstain, from giving any public encouragement to those who are engaged in the work of converting natives to Christianity. And while we act thus, can we reasonably and decently bribe men, out of the revenues of the state, to waste their youth in learning how they are to purify themselves after touching an ass, or what text of the Vedas they are to repeat to expiate the crime of killing a goat?

It is taken for granted by the advocates of Oriental learning, that no native of this country can possibly attain more than a mere smattering of English. They do not attempt to prove this; but they perpetually insinuate it. They designate the education which their opponents recommend as a mere spelling-book education. They assume it as undeniable, that the question is between a profound knowledge of Hindoo and Arabian literature and science on the one side, and a superficial knowledge of the rudiments of English on the other. This is not merely an assumption, but an assumption contrary to all reason and experience. We know that foreigners of all nations do learn our language sufficiently to have access to all the most abstruse knowledge which it contains, sufficiently to relish even the more delicate graces of our most idiomatic writers. There are in this very town natives who are quite competent to discuss political or scientific questions with fluency and precision in the English language. I have heard the very question on which I am now writing discussed by native gentlemen with a liberality and an intelligence which would do credit to any member of the Committee of Public Instruction. Indeed, it is unusual to find, even in the literary circles of the Continent, any foreigner who can express himself in English with so much facility and correctness as we find in many Hindoos. Nobody, I suppose, will contend, that English is so difficult to a Hindoo as Greek to an Englishman. Yet an intelligent English youth, in a much smaller number of years than our unfortunate pupils pass at the Sanscrit College, becomes able to read, to enjoy, and even to imitate, not unhappily, the compositions of the best Greek authors.

Less than half the time which enables an English youth to read Herodotus and Sophocles, ought to enable a Hindoo to read Hume and Milton.

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In one point I fully agree with the gentlemen to whose general views I am opposed. I feel with them, that it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.

1835

WILLIAM HOWARD RUSSELL

One of the first war correspondents, the Irish-born Russell (1820–1907) became famous for his dispatches to the London *Times* during the Crimean War (1854–56) and later reported on the American Civil War (1861–65). After the outbreak of the Indian Uprising (1857–59), a rebellion of native troops and peasantry, Russell traveled to northern India to report on the Uprising's suppression by British troops. More sympathetic toward the Indians than most Victorians, Russell debunked many of the most shocking rumors about the rape, torture, and killing of British people and criticized the cruelty of indiscriminate British reprisals. In the following selections he reflects on the fate of the British community at Cawnpore, which surrendered to the Indian rebels and was subsequently massacred.

From My Diary in India, in the Year 1858–59

[CAWNPORE]

February 12th.—* * * The scenes where great crimes have been perpetrated ever possess an interest, which I would not undertake to stigmatise as morbid; and surely among the sites rendered infamous for all time, Cawnpore will be pre-eminent as the magnitude of the atrocities with which it is connected. But, though pre-eminent among crimes, the massacre of Cawnpore is by no means singular or unprecedented in any of the circumstances which mark turpitude and profundity of guilt. We who suffered from it think that there never was such wickedness in the world, and the incessant efforts of a gang of forgers and utterers of lies have surrounded it with horrors needlessly invented in the hope of adding to the indignation and burning desire for vengeance which the naked facts aroused. Helpless garrisons, surrendering under capitulation, have been massacred ere now; men, women, and children have been ruthlessly butchered by the enemies of their race ere now; risings, such as that of the people of Pontus under Mithridates, of the Irish Roman Catholics against the Protestant settlers in 1641, of the actors in the Sicilian vespers, of the assassins who smote and spared none on the eve of St. Bartholomew,[1] have taken place before, and have been over and over again attended by inhuman cruelty, violation, and torture. The history of mediaeval Europe affords many instances of crimes as great as those of Cawnpore; the history of civilized nations could afford some parallel to them even in modern times. In fact, the peculiar[2] aggravation of the Cawnpore massacres was this, that the deed was done by a subject race—by black men who dared to shed the blood of their masters and mistresses, and to butcher poor helpless ladies and children, who were the women and offspring of

the dominant and conquering people. Here we had not only a servile war and a sort of Jacquerie[3] combined, but we had a war of religion, a war of race, a war of revenge, mingled together in a contest in which the insurgents were also actuated by some national promptings to shake off the yoke of a stranger, and to reestablish the full power of native chiefs, and the full sway of native religions. There is a kind of God's revenge against murder in the unsuccessful issue of all enterprises commenced in massacre, and carried on by cruelty and bloodshed. Whatever the causes of the mutiny and the revolt, it is clear enough that one of the modes by which the leaders, as if by common instinct, determined to effect their end was, the destruction of every white man, woman, or child who fell into their hands—a design which the kindliness of the people, or motives of policy, frustrated on many remarkable occasions. It must be remembered that the punishments of the Hindoo are cruel, and whether he be mild or not, he certainly is not, any more than the Mussulman,[4] distinguished for clemency towards his enemies. But philosophize and theorize as we may, Cawnpore will be a name ever heard by English ears with horror long after the present generation has passed away.

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February 13th.—* * * The difficulty, in my mind, was to believe that it [Cawnpore] could ever have been defended at all. Make every allowance for the effects of weather, for circumstances, it is still the most wretched defensive position that could be imagined. Honour to those who defended it! Pity for their fate! Above all, pity for the lot of those whom the strong arms and brave hearts failed to save from the unknown dangers of that foul treachery! It was a horrible spot! Inside the shattered rooms, which had been the scene of such devotion and suffering, are heaps of rubbish and filth. The intrenchment is used as a *cloaca maxima*[5] by the natives, camp-followers, coolies, and others who bivouac in the sandy plains around it. The smells are revolting. Rows of gorged vultures sit with

outspread wings on the mouldering parapets, or perch in clusters on the two or three leafless trees at the angle of the works by which we enter. I shot one with my revolver; and as the revolting creature disgorged its meal, twisting its bare black snake-like neck to and fro, I made a vow I would never incur the risk of beholding such a disgusting sight again.

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February 14th.—* * * All the country about Cawnpore is covered with the finest powdered dust, two or three inches deep, which rises into the air on the smallest provocation. It is composed of sand, pulverized earth, and the brick powder and mortar of the dilapidated houses; whatever, in fact, can turn into dust. As the natives shuffle along, their pointed slippers fling up suffocating clouds of this unpleasant compound, and when these slippers are multiplied by thousands, the air is filled with a floating stratum of it, fifteen or eighteen feet high, and extending over the whole of the station. Even in the old days, when the roads were watered, the station of Cawnpore had a bad notoriety for dust. What an earthquake to shake to pieces, what a volcano to smother with lava and ashes, has this mutiny been! Not alone cities, but confidence and trust have gone, never more to be restored!



Cawnpore. A contemporary engraving, entitled *Massacre at Cawnpore*.

Among those heaps of dust and ashes, those arid mounds of brick, those new-made trenches, I try in vain to realize what was once this station of Cawnpore. The solemn etiquette, the visits to the Brigadier and the General *en grande tenue*,[6] the invitations to dinner, the white kid-gloves, the balls, the liveries, the affectation of the *plus haut des hauts tons*,[7] the millinery anxieties of the ladies, the ices, and champagne, and supper, the golden-robed Nana Sahib,[8] moving about amid haughty stares and ill-concealed dislike. "What the deuce does the General ask that n***** here for?" The little and big flirtations, the drives on the road—a dull, ceremonious pleasure—the faded fun of the private theatricals, the exotic absurdities of the masonic revels, the marryings and givings in marriage, the little bills done by the rich bunneahs,[9] the small and great pecuniary relations between the station and the bazaar, the sense of security—and then on all this exaggerated relief of an English garrison-town and watering-place, the deep gloom of apprehension—at first "a shave of old Smith's,"[1] then a well-authenticated report, then a certainty of

disaffection—rolling like thunder-clouds, and darkening the glassy surface of the gay society till it burst on it in stormy and cruel reality. But I cannot.

"Ah! you should have seen Cawnpore in its palmy days, when there were two cavalry regiments here, a lot of artillery, and three regiments of infantry in the cantonments.[2] Chock full of pretty women! The private theatricals every week; balls, and picnics, and dinners every evening. By Jove! it's too horrible to look at it now!" And so, indeed, it was. But one is tempted to ask if there is not some lesson and some warning given to our race in reference to India by the tremendous catastrophe of Cawnpore? I am deeply impressed by the difficulty of ruling India, as it is now governed by force, exercised by a few who are obliged to employ natives as the instruments of coercion. That force is the base of our rule I have no doubt; for I see nothing else but force employed in our relations with the governed. The efforts to improve the condition of the people are made by bodies or individuals who have no connection with the Government. The action of the Government in matters of improvement is only excited by considerations of revenue. Does it—as the great instructor of the people, the exponent of our superior morality and civilization—does it observe treaties, keep faith, pursue a fixed and equitable policy, and follow the precepts of Christianity in its conduct towards states and peoples? Are not our courts of law condemned by ourselves? Are not our police admitted to be a curse and a blight upon the country? In effect, the grave, unhappy doubt which settles on my mind is, whether India is the better for our rule, so far as regards the social condition of the great mass of the people. We have put down widow-burning,[3] we have sought to check infanticide; but I have travelled hundreds of miles through a country peopled with beggars and covered with wigwam villages.

1858–59 1860

Endnotes

- Note 1: All incidents in which culturally or religiously distinct minorities were attacked by members of a dominant population.

Mithradates VI, the ruler of Pontus, a kingdom of northeast Asia Minor, led his armies to massacre Roman and Italian residents in Asia in 88 B.C.E. In 1641 in Ulster, a county in northern Ireland, dispossessed native Irish Catholics rose up against English and Scottish Protestant settlers. Sicilians rebelled in 1282 against Charles I, the French-born king of Naples (son of Louis VIII and brother of Louis IX of France). In 1572, on the evening before the feast day of St. Bartholomew (August 24), some Catholic nobles in the French royal court began a massacre of Huguenots (French Protestants), giving new impetus to a lengthy religious civil war.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Particular.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Peasant rebellion. The term derives from the 1358 uprising of peasants, known derisively as "Jacques," against nobles in northern France.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Muslim.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Largest sewer (Latin), after the main sewer draining northeast Rome (which even in the classical period was covered).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In full military dress (French).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The highest of high fashions (French).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A dispossessed Hindu ruler who took at least nominal charge of the rebel forces at Cawnpore and who was seen by many British as the mastermind behind the massacres.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The receipts written up by wealthy merchants.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: An unconfirmed report (military slang) of an incident from Lieutenant Colonel George Acklom Smith at his post at Fatehgarh, sixty miles from Cawnpore.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Permanent military stations in British India. "Palmy": prosperous.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Suttee, the custom of a Hindu widow burning herself on her husband's funeral pyre; it was outlawed by the British in 1829. Some historians believe this ban may have increased the

visibility and possibly even the incidence of this practice.Return to reference 3

F. A. (FLORA ANNIE) STEEL and G. (GRACE) GARDINER

The marriage of Flora Annie Steel (1847–1929) to a member of the Indian Civil Service brought her to India in 1868. The English-born community in India represented less than 1 percent of the population. Nevertheless, members of this community played a critical role in the fate of the then colony. Women were especially central to claims about the "civilizing" mission of the British, as Steel's career reflects: in 1884, she was appointed Inspectress of Schools, responsible for girls' schools between Peshwar and Delhi; she also served on the Provincial Education Board, where she collaborated with Rudyard Kipling's father, John Lockwood Kipling, on the writing and illustrating of school primers. Less is known about Grace Gardiner, although she, too, was married to an officer in the Indian Civil Service. *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* (1888, 1893) provides an insight into the daily lives and ordinary assumptions of the women and men responsible for the British Empire in India.

From The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook

Chapter I. The Duties of the Mistress

Housekeeping in India, when once the first strangeness has worn off, is a far easier task in many ways than it is in England, though it none the less requires time, and, in this present transitional period, an almost phenomenal patience; for, while one mistress enforces cleanliness according to European methods, the next may belong to the opposite faction, who, so long as the dinner is nicely served, thinks nothing of it being cooked in a kitchen which is also used as a latrine; the result being that the servants who serve one and then the other stamp of mistress, look on the desire for decency as a mere personal and distinctly disagreeable attribute of their employer, which, like a bad temper or stinginess, may be resented or evaded.

And, first, it must be distinctly understood that it is not necessary, or in the least degree desirable, that an educated woman should waste the best years of her life in scolding and petty supervision. Life holds higher duties, and it is indubitable that friction and over-zeal is a sure sign of a bad housekeeper. But there is an appreciable difference between the careworn Martha[1] vexed with many things, and the absolute indifference displayed by many Indian Mistresses, who put up with a degree of slovenliness and dirt which would disgrace a den in St Giles,[2] on the principle that it is no use attempting to teach the natives.

They never go into their kitchens, for the simple reason that their appetite for breakfast might be marred by seeing the *khitmutgûr*[3] using his toes as an efficient toast-rack (*fact*); or their desire for dinner weakened by seeing the soup strained through a greasy *pugri*.[4]

The ostrich, who, according to the showman, "*'ides 'is head in the sand and thinks as 'e can't see no one, as nobody can't see 'e*," has, fortunately, an exceptional faculty of digestion. With this remark we will leave a very unpleasant subject.

Easy, however, as the actual housekeeping is in India, the personal attention of the mistress is quite as much needed here as

at home. The Indian servant, it is true, learns more readily, and is guiltless of the sniffiness with which Mary Jane[5] receives suggestions, but a few days of absence or neglect on the part of the mistress, results in the servants falling into their old habits with the inherited conservatism of dirt. This is, of course, disheartening, but it has to be faced as a necessary condition of life, until a few generations of training shall have started the Indian servant on a new inheritance of habit. It must never be forgotten that at present those mistresses who aim at anything beyond keeping a good table are in the minority, and that pioneering is always arduous work.

The first duty of a mistress is, of course, to be able to give intelligible orders to her servants; therefore it is necessary she should learn to speak Hindustani.[6] No sane Englishwoman would dream of living, say, for twenty years, in Germany, Italy, or France, without making the *attempt*, at any rate, to learn the language. She would, in fact, feel that by neglecting to do so she would "*write herself down an ass*."[7] It would be well, therefore, if ladies in India were to ask themselves if a difference in longitude increases the latitude allowed in judging of a woman's intellect.

The next duty is obviously to insist on her orders being carried out. And here we come to the burning question, "How is this to be done?" Certainly, there is at present very little to which we can appeal in the average Indian servant, but then, until it is implanted by training, there is very little sense of duty in a child; yet in some well-regulated nurseries obedience is a foregone conclusion. The secret lies in making rules, and *keeping to them*. The Indian servant is a child in everything save age, and should be treated as a child; that is to say, kindly, but with the greatest firmness. The laws of the household should be those of the Medes and Persians,[8] and first faults should never go unpunished. By overlooking a first offence, we lose the only opportunity we have of preventing it becoming a habit.

1888

Endnotes

- Note 1: In Luke 10:38–41, Martha is the active sister to the contemplative Mary.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: London slum.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The object of this book being to enable a person who is absolutely unacquainted with India, its language and people, to begin housekeeping at once, the authors have decided on adhering throughout to purely phonetic spelling. The only accent used will be the circumflex [*Authors' note*]. A khitmutgûr is a male servant.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Turban.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: General term for a female servant in England.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Combination of Hindi and Urdu.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In William Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, the constable Dogberry tells his masters to "write me down an ass."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Reference to Daniel 6:15: "the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed."Return to reference 8

T. N. MUKHARJI

Trailokya Nath Mukharji, a government official and Brahman (a member of the highest Hindu caste), traveled to England with the Indian delegation for the Indian and Colonial Exhibition of 1886. On his return home his impressions of the trip were serialized in a weekly Indian newspaper, and then reprinted in a book published in London and Calcutta. In the following selection Mukharji describes his experiences with, and observations of, the British.

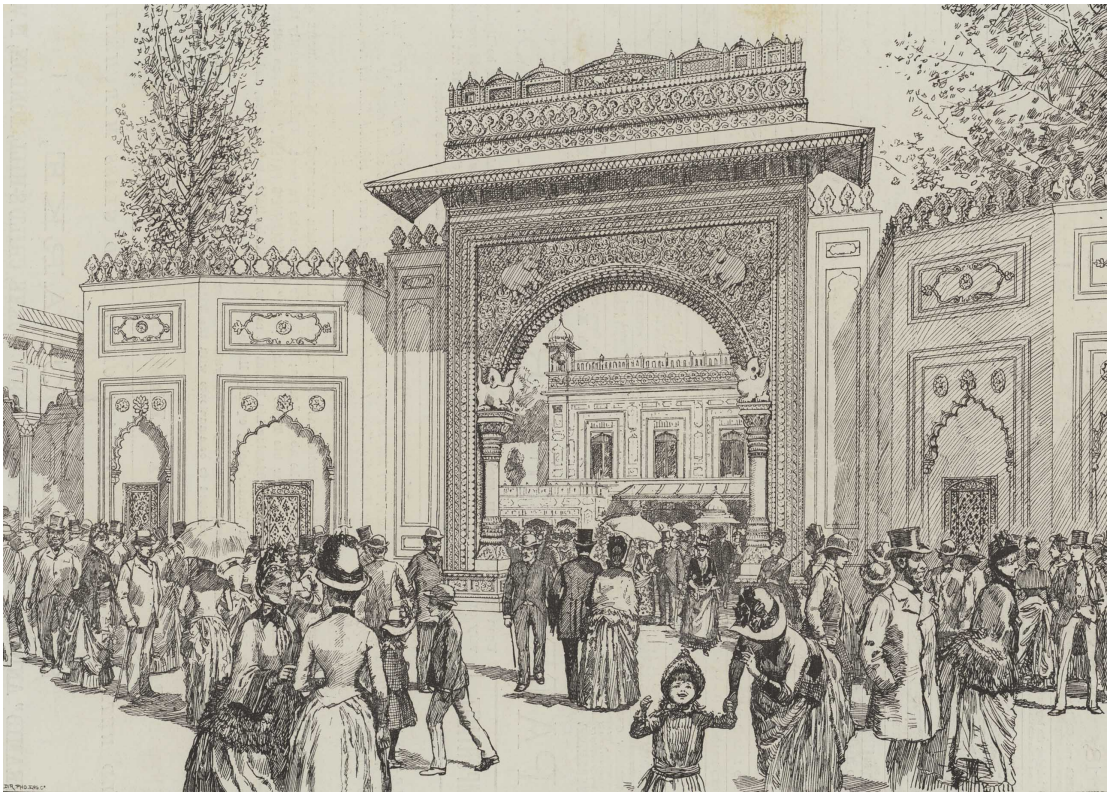
From A Visit to Europe

[THE INDIAN AND COLONIAL EXHIBITION]

Another place of considerable interest to the natives of England was the Indian Bazar where Hindu and Muhammadan artisans carried on their avocations, to witness which men, women and children flocked from all parts of the kingdom. A dense crowd always stood there, looking at our men as they wove the gold brocade, sang the patterns of the carpet[1] and printed the calico with the hand. They were as much astonished to see the Indians produce works of art with the aid of rude apparatus they themselves had discarded long ago, as a Hindu would be to see a chimpanzee officiating as a priest in a funeral ceremony and reading out Sanskrit texts from a palm leaf book spread before him. We were very interesting beings no doubt, so were the Zulus before us, and so is the Sioux chief at the present time (1887). Human nature everywhere thirsts for novelty, and measures out its favours in proportion to the rarity and oddity of a thing. It was from the ladies that we received the largest amount of patronage. We were pierced through and through by stares from eyes of all colours—green, gray, blue and black—and every movement and act of ours, walking, sitting, eating, reading, received its full share of "O, I, never!" The number of wives we left behind at home was also a constant theme of speculation among them, and shrewd guesses were sometimes made on this point, 250 being a favourite number. You could tell any amount of stories on this subject without exciting the slightest suspicion. Once, one of our number told a pretty waitress—"I am awfully pleased with you, and I want to marry you. Will you accept the fortieth wifeship in my household which became vacant just before I left my country?" She asked —"How many wives have you altogether?" "Two hundred and fifty, the usual number," was the ready answer. "What became of your wife, number 40?" "I killed her, because one morning she could not

cook my porridge well." The poor girl was horrified, and exclaimed —"O you monster, O you wretch!" Then she narrated the sad fate of a friend of hers. She was a sweet little child, when an African student studying in Edinburgh came and wooed her. They got married in England and fondly loved each other. Everything went well as long as the pair lived in England, but after a short time he took his fair wife to his desert home in Liberia. Not a single white man or woman could she see there, and she felt very lonely. But the sight of her mother-in-law, who dressed in feathers and skins came dancing into the house half-tipsy, was more than she could bear. She pined for a short time and died.

Of course, every nation in the world considers other nations as savages or at least much inferior to itself. It was so from the beginning and it will be so as long as human nature will retain its present character. We did not therefore wonder that the common people should take us for barbarians, awkward as we were in every respect. They have very strict notions of dress, manners and the general bearing of a man, any deviation from which is seriously noticed. Utmost indulgence was however shewn to us everywhere. Her Majesty was graciously pleased to lay aside the usual rules, and this favour was shewn us wherever we went. Gentlemen and ladies of high education and culture, however, honoured us as the representatives of the most ancient nation now existing on the face of the earth. They would frequently ask us home, get up private parties and arrange for all sorts of amusements. In other houses we grew more intimate and formed part of the family party. To these we were always welcome, and could go and come whenever we liked. We got some friends among them, and these gentlemen would often come and fetch us home if we absented ourselves for more than the ordinary length of time. I fondly remember the happy days I passed with them, and feel thankful for the kindness they shewed me during my sojourn in their country.



The Indian and Colonial Exhibition. This depiction of the Gawlior Gateway, entrance to the Indian Palace at the Indian and Colonial Exhibition, appeared in the *Illustrated London News* in July 1886.

In public matters non-official gentlemen were also very partial to us. “We want to hear the turbanned gentleman” was the wish often and often expressed. But we ceased not to be a prodigious wonder to strangers and to the common people. Would they discuss us so freely if they knew that we understood their language? It was very amusing to hear what they said about us. Often when fatigued with work, or when cares and anxieties cast a gloom upon our mind, we found such talks about us more refreshing than a glass of port wine. I wish I had the ability to do justice to the discussing power of these ladies and gentlemen exercised in their kind notice of us, for in that case I could produce one of the most interesting books ever published. Or if I had known that I would be required to write an account of my visit to Europe, I would have taken notes of at least some of the remarkable hits on truth unconsciously made by

ignorant people from the country, which are applicable to all nations and which set one to philosophise on the material difference that exists between our own estimate of ourselves and the estimate which others form of us.

If we were interesting beings in the eyes of the Londoners, who had oftener opportunities of seeing their fellow subjects from the far East, how much more would we be so to the simple villagers who came by thousands to see the wonders of the Exhibition. Their conduct towards us was always kind and respectful. They liked to talk to us, and whenever convenient we tried to satisfy their curiosity. Men, women and children, whose relations are in India serving as soldiers or in any other capacity, would come through the crowd, all panting, to shake hands with us and ask about their friends. Many queer incidents happened in this way. "Do you know Jim,—James Robinson you know of —— Regiment?" asked a fat elderly woman, who one day came bustling through the crowd and took me by storm, without any of those preliminary manœuvres usually adopted to open a conversation with a stranger. I expressed my regret in not having the honour of Jim's acquaintance. The good old lady then explained to me that she was Jim's aunt, and gave me a long history of her nephew, and the circumstances which led to his enlistment as a soldier. If the truant nephew lost the golden opportunity of sending through us his dutiful message to his aunt, she on her part was not wanting in her affectionate remembrances of him. Among other things, most of which I did not understand, for she did not speak the English we ordinarily hear nor was her language quite coherent at the time, she begged me to carry to Jim the important intelligence that Mrs. Jones' fat pig obtained a prize at the Smithfield Agricultural Show. I shewed my alacrity to carry the message right off to Jim in the wilds of Upper Burma by immediately taking leave of the lady, who joined her friends and explained to them that I was a bosom friend of her nephew.

Endnotes

- Note 1: When carpets are produced on handlooms, overseers sometimes sing out the number and color of each thread needed for the pattern; the weavers then repeat back the instructions in a chorus.Return to reference 1

Settler Colonialism: Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa

If it is difficult to describe "the British Empire" as a single or uniform phenomenon, it is similarly impossible to describe "settler colonialism" in simple terms. What sets "settler" colonialism apart from other forms such as plantation colonialism, is that it is characterized by the immigration of large numbers of Britons with the intention of displacing the native population. From the perspective of the Indigenous people who experienced it, therefore, the consequences were consistent and appalling: death at the hands of the settlers, whether through war, disease, displacement, or environmental devastation. At the same time, the dynamics of colonization varied markedly according to different conditions on the ground.

The example of Canada is particularly interesting in this regard. Originally colonized by the French, who ceded nearly all their possessions to the United Kingdom at the end of the Seven Years' War (1763), Canadian history is also marked by the immigration of some Indigenous peoples from the United States, who had sided with the British in the Revolutionary War. Thus, E. Pauline Johnson, who wrote under the Mohawk name Tekahionwake, belonged to a tribe for whom loyalty to the Queen could serve as a way to appeal decisions made by the colonial government. However much this triangulation may have complicated the political landscape, it did not impede the genocide of Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous people in what is now South Africa had a different history with imperialism and so, too, a very different relationship to the British. Additional information about South Africa is available in the entry on Olive Schreiner, but briefly, when the Cape Colony officially became a British colony in 1814, local inhabitants included not just the Xhosa and the Zulu, but the Boers (Dutch farmers) who

had occupied the area since shortly after the Dutch East India Company established a trading post in Cape Town in 1652. The fortunes of the country were marked by this diverse and complicated history of conflict and exploitation—and then were complicated still further by the discovery of diamonds and gold in the nineteenth century.

Australia's first settlers in 1788 were British convicts (some of whom were originally African, American, or French) who had been "transported" rather than being executed for crimes ranging from petty theft to murder. Meanwhile, New Zealand was initially governed by Australia but became its own colony in 1840. Australia and New Zealand were both characterized by limited self-government, farming, and then mining—as well as massive devastation of the native populations.

SUSANNA MOODIE

Poet, novelist, memoirist, magazine editor, and Canadian settler, Susanna Strickland Moodie (1803–1885) was born in Suffolk, England. Her religious commitments as a Dissenter led her to abolitionism: as a member of the Anti-Slavery Society, she helped transcribe *The History of Mary Prince*, excerpted in this cluster. In 1832, Moodie emigrated with her husband and daughter to Canada. Their attempts to settle were largely unsuccessful, but her accounts of those experiences, *Roughing It in the Bush; or Life in Canada* (1852) and *Life in the Clearings* (1853), were extremely popular. In this passage, Moodie describes some of her encounters with Indigenous people, who were being displaced by the new settlers. Despite her obvious sympathy for their plight, she often uses stereotyped images and racist terminology.

From Roughing It in the Bush; or, Life in Canada

My husband had purchased a very light cedar canoe, to which he attached a keel and a sail; and most of our leisure hours, directly the snows melted, were spent upon the water.

These fishing and shooting excursions were delightful. The pure beauty of the Canadian water, the sombre but august grandeur of the vast forest that hemmed us in on every side and shut us out from the rest of the world, soon cast a magic spell upon our spirits, and we began to feel charmed with the freedom and solitude around us. Every object was new to us. We felt as if we were the first discoverers of every beautiful flower and stately tree that attracted our attention, and we gave names to fantastic rocks and fairy isles, and raised imaginary houses and bridges on every picturesque spot which we floated past during our aquatic excursions. I learned the use of the paddle, and became quite a proficient in the gentle craft.

It was not long before we received visits from the Indians, a people whose beauty, talents, and good qualities have been somewhat overrated, and invested with a poetical interest which they scarcely deserve. Their honesty and love of truth are the finest traits in characters otherwise dark and unlovely. But these are two God-like attributes, and from them spring all that is generous and ennobling about them.

There never was a people more sensible of kindness, or more grateful for any little act of benevolence exercised towards them. We met them with confidence; our dealings with them were conducted with the strictest integrity; and they became attached to our persons, and in no single instance ever destroyed the good opinion we entertained of them.

The tribes that occupy the shores of all these inland waters, back of the great lakes, belong to the Chippewa or Missasagua Indians,

perhaps the least attractive of all these wild people, both with regard to their physical and mental endowments.

The men of this tribe are generally small of stature, with very coarse and repulsive features. The forehead is low and retreating, the observing faculties large, the intellectual ones scarcely developed; the ears large, and standing off from the face; the eyes looking towards the temples, keen, snake-like, and far apart; the cheek-bones prominent; the nose long and flat, the nostrils very round; the jaw-bone projecting, massy, and brutal; the mouth expressing ferocity and sullen determination; the teeth large, even, and dazzlingly white. The mouth of the female differs widely in expression from that of the male; the lips are fuller, the jaw less projecting, and the smile is simple and agreeable. The women are a merry, light-hearted set, and their constant laugh and incessant prattle form a strange contrast to the iron taciturnity of their grim lords.

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The cunning which they display in their contests with their enemies, in their hunting, and in making bargains with the whites (who are too apt to impose on their ignorance), seems to spring more from a law of necessity, forced upon them by their isolated position and precarious mode of life, than from any innate wish to betray. The Indian’s face, after all, is a perfect index of his mind. The eye changes its expression with every impulse and passion, and shows what is passing within as clearly as the lightning in a dark night betrays the course of the stream. I cannot think that deceit forms any prominent trait in the Indian’s character. They invariably act with the strictest honour towards those who never attempt to impose upon them. It is natural for a deceitful person to take advantage of the credulity of others. The genuine Indian never utters a falsehood, and never employs flattery (that powerful weapon in the hands of the insidious), in his communications with the whites.

His worst traits are those which he has in common with the wild animals of the forest, and which his intercourse with the lowest order of civilised men (who, in point of moral worth, are greatly his inferiors), and the pernicious effects of strong drink, have greatly tended to inflame and debase.

It is a melancholy truth, and deeply to be lamented, that the vicinity of European settlers has always produced a very demoralising effect upon the Indians. As a proof of this, I will relate a simple anecdote.

Jah, of Rice Lake, a very sensible, middle-aged Indian, was conversing with me about their language, and the difficulty he found in understanding the books written in Indian for their use. Among other things, I asked him if his people ever swore, or used profane language towards the Deity.

The man regarded me with a sort of stern horror, as he replied, "Indian, till after he knew your people, never swore—no bad word in Indian. Indian must learn your words to swear and take God's name in vain."

Oh, what a reproof to Christian men! I felt abashed, and degraded in the eyes of this poor savage—who, ignorant as he was in many respects, yet possessed that first great attribute of the soul, a deep reverence for the Supreme Being. How inferior were thousands of my countrymen to him in this important point!

The affection of Indian parents to their children, and the deference which they pay to the aged, is another beautiful and touching trait in their character.

One extremely cold, wintry day, as I was huddled with my little ones over the stove, the door softly unclosed, and the moccasined foot of an Indian crossed the floor. I raised my head, for I was too much accustomed to their sudden appearance at any hour to feel alarmed, and perceived a tall woman standing silently and respectfully before me, wrapped in a large blanket. The moment she caught my eye she dropped the folds of her covering from around her, and laid at my feet the attenuated figure of a boy, about twelve years of age, who was in the last stage of consumption.

"Papouse die," she said, mournfully clasping her hands against her breast, and looking down upon the suffering lad with the most heartfelt expression of maternal love, while large tears trickled down her dark face. "Moodie's squaw save papouse—poor Indian woman much glad."

Her child was beyond all human aid. I looked anxiously upon him, and knew, by the pinched-up features and purple hue of his wasted check, that he had not many hours to live. I could only answer with tears her agonising appeal to my skill.

"Try and save him! All die but him." (She held up five of her fingers.) "Brought him all the way from Mutta Lake[1] upon my back, for white squaw to cure."

"I cannot cure him, my poor friend. He is in God's care; in a few hours he will be with Him."

The child was seized with a dreadful fit of coughing, which I expected every moment would terminate his frail existence. I gave him a teaspoonful of currant-jelly, which he took with avidity, but could not retain a moment on his stomach.

"Papouse die," murmured the poor woman; "alone—alone! No papouse; the mother all alone."

She began re-adjusting the poor sufferer in her blanket. I got her some food, and begged her to stay and rest herself; but she was too much distressed to eat, and too restless to remain. She said little, but her face expressed the keenest anguish; she took up her mournful load, pressed for a moment his wasted, burning hand in hers, and left the room.

My heart followed her a long way on her melancholy journey. Think what this woman's love must have been for that dying son, when she had carried a lad of his age six miles, through the deep snow, upon her back, on such a day, in the hope of my being able to do him some good. Poor heart-broken mother! I learned from Joe Muskrat's squaw some days after that the boy died a few minutes after Elizabeth Iron, his mother, got home.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Mud Lake, or Lake *Shemong*, in Indian [*Moodie's note*].Return to reference 1

E. PAULINE JOHNSON/TEKAHIONWAKE

"Tekahionwake" is the Mohawk name used by E. Pauline Johnson for her poetry and performances. (The Mohawk are the easternmost tribe of the Iroquois [Haudenosaunee] Confederacy.) Her mother was born in England; her father was a member of one the tribes that allied with the British in the American Revolutionary War and moved to Canada after its conclusion. Both the British and the Mohawk aspects of Johnson's identity played important roles in her writings and public life. For a more complete description of her work and significance, see her entry later in this volume. "The Corn Husker" (1896) is one of her most famous poems, and it reproduces one of the more common tropes of Indigenous representation: the "doomed Indian" who watches as native land is appropriated by colonizers.

The Corn Husker

Hard by the Indian lodges, where the bush
  Breaks in a clearing, through ill-fashioned fields,
She comes to labour, when the first still hush
  Of autumn follows large and recent yields.

Age in her fingers, hunger in her face,
  Her shoulders stooped with weight of work and years,
But rich in tawny colouring of her race,
  She comes a-field to strip the purple ears.

And all her thoughts are with the days gone by,
  Ere might's injustice banished from their lands
Her people, that to-day unheeded lie,
  Like the dead husks that rustle through her hands.

1896

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

A prolific chronicler of British social and political life, Anthony Trollope (1815–1882) wrote novels that were, and remain, extremely popular. He was also a civil servant, employed by the Postal Service as a postal inspector, and an enthusiastic and frequent traveler both as an agent of the Postal Service and on his own. In addition to his writings on Australia and New Zealand, he published volumes on the West Indies, North America, and South Africa.

From South Australia and Western Australia

The black men[1] in Western Australia were certainly not treated with exceptional harshness,—were perhaps treated with exceptional kindness,—but they were very troublesome to the new-comers. There was much of spearing on the one side, and much of shooting and hanging on the other. There seem to have been two pertinacious chiefs, or resolute leading natives, named Yagar and Midgegoroo, who gave a great amount of trouble. They carried on the war for four or five years, by no means without success. The records speak of them as horrible savages. They were probably brave patriots, defending their country and their rights. Midgegoroo was at last taken and shot. What was the end of Yagar, or whether he came to an end, no one seems to know.

And there were many other troubles in the young settlement which, as we read the record, make us feel that it was no easy thing to be an early colonist. Food for the newcomers was often wanted. The young crops of wheat, on which so much depended, were destroyed by moths and red rust. There was great lack of any circulating medium. The soil, though good in many places, was good only in patches very distant from each other; and there were no roads,—so that the settler who produced meat in one place could not exchange it for the corn and wheat produced elsewhere. And there was no labour. That of all evils was perhaps the one most difficult to be encountered and overcome. The black man would not work; and the white man who had his block of ground thickly covered with gumtrees and blackboys,[2]—a large resinous shrub common in the country is called by the latter name,—could not clear it and till it and sow it with sufficient rapidity to procure sustenance for himself and family.

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This struggle was very hard in the first infant days of Western Australia; and there seems often to have arisen the question whether upon the whole it would not be well that the settlement should be abandoned. In 1832 the troubles were so grievous that the governor, Captain Stirling, went home to represent matters. Could not something be done for the poor strugglers? At the end of this year there were only six hundred acres of land under grain, and the reason given for so slight an advance was the difficulty, or almost impossibility, of procuring seed. In 1834 the governor returned as Sir James Stirling, and the struggle went on. * * * At this time the system of transportation had already become odious to the other colonies,—especially to New South Wales.[3] The stain of the convict element had been felt to be disgraceful, and the very name was repulsive and injurious. But convicts could be made to labour, to open out roads and clear timber and build bridges, and do works without which it is impossible that a young colony should thrive. And the expense of convicts would be borne by the imperial revenue. Convict labour, bad as it might be, meant labour for nothing. The mother country, which would give but little else, in her desire to rid herself of her own ruffians, would no doubt give that. It was known that the mother country was hard pressed in that matter, not knowing what to do with her convicted ruffianism, and that she would be only too happy to send a few thousands to the Swan River.[4] But the colony rejected the petition which was originated at King George's Sound,[5] and would not as yet condescend so far.

But things went from bad to worse. In 1838 there was a sad wail. Ten thousand barrels of oil were taken off the coast, but not a barrel was taken by an English or colonial vessel. All this wealth had fallen into the hands of French or American whalers. And the murders went on, and the hangings. And in 1840 all the wheat was destroyed by a moth. There had indeed been glimpses of success. In 1832 a Legislative Council first sat,—nominated of course by the governor; and in the same year a newspaper was published,—in

manuscript. Soon afterwards a theatrical entertainment was given, and a printing-press was brought out, and a public clock was set up, and churches were opened. Struggles were made gallantly. Mr. Eyre,[6] who was not so successful afterwards when he went as governor to Jamaica, made his way across the country from South Australia to King George's Sound, through the most sterile region of the continent, performing one of those wonderfully gallant acts by which Australian explorers have made themselves famous. Fresh acres were brought under cultivation. In 1843 the white population had risen to nearly four thousand. But still things were very bad. We are told that in 1844, from scarcity of money and other causes, the colony was in a most depressed condition. In 1845 a second petition for convicts was circulated,—not only at King George's Sound, but throughout the colony. It did not, however, find much favour, and was signed by no more than one hundred and four settlers. The struggle still went on, and on the whole very bravely.

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From 1850 down to 1868,—and indeed to the present day and for many a day to come,—the history of Western Australia is and will be that of a convict colony.[7] Whether it is well that a young and struggling settlement should be assisted after such a fashion is a question on which they who have studied the subject in regard to Australia differ very much. As regards the colony now under review, I am inclined to think that it could not have been kept alive without extraneous aid; and I do not know what other sufficient extraneous aid could have been given to it. It may be well to explain here that the exportation of convicts to Western Australia was discontinued, not in deference to the wishes of the colony itself, nor because the mother country was tired of sending them,—but because the other colonies complained. The convicts when released got away to South Australia and Victoria,—or, at any rate, the Victorians and South Australians so reported; and thus the stain was still continued to the

young Eastern world. The other colonies remonstrated, and therefore convicts are no longer sent to the Swan River.

1874

Endnotes

- Note 1: Members of the Indigenous population.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: *Xanthorrhoea australis* or grass tree, native to Australia.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: State on the east coast of Australia; "transportation": refers to the common British practice of "transporting" or exiling convicts to Australia.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: River in Western Australia.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Sound in Western Australia.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Edward John Eyre made his reputation as a skillful explorer of Australia. In 1854, he became governor of several island colonies in the Caribbean; in 1865, he ordered the violent suppression of the Morant Bay rebellion in the colony of Jamaica. (See entries by John Stuart Mill and Thomas Carlyle in this section.)Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Britain sent its first convicts to Australia in 1787; penal transportation ended in 1868.Return to reference 7

OLIVE SCHREINER

The daughter of a German missionary and his British wife, Olive Schreiner (1855–1920) was born in the British Cape Colony in what is now South Africa. She is now best known for her novel, *Story of an African Farm* (1883), selections from which can be found later in this volume, but during her lifetime she was an energetic campaigner for women's rights and on African political issues. Schreiner was particularly active in her opposition to the expansionist violence of the Cape Colony's prime minister, Cecil Rhodes. In "Stray Thoughts on South Africa" (1891), she looks ahead toward the future of her country.

From Stray Thoughts on South Africa

It may be said that there are no states in South Africa whose boundaries represent deep-lying racial conditions, but rather mere fiscal and parochial divisions. All the conditions on which unity of national life depends cross and re-cross their boundaries in every direction. Race, language, religion, kinship, all militate against homogeneity. But not yet have we grasped the full complexity and difficulty of our South African question. Not only do the South Africans exist everywhere in superimposed layers of differing races, not only are our political states composed of a mingling of all our peoples, but in our households, our families, and very persons we are blended. There is probably not a civilised roof in South Africa which covers people of only one nationality:[1] as a rule they are of three or four. We take a typical Cape household before us at the moment: the father is English, the mother half Dutch and half French Huguenot, with a French name, the children sharing three nationalities; the governess is a Scotchwoman, the cook a Zulu, the housemaid half Hottentot and half Dutch, the kitchen girl half Dutch and half slave, the stable boy a Kafir, and the little girl who waits at table a Basuto.[2] This household is a type of thousands of others to be found everywhere throughout Africa. If a homely and crude illustration may be allowed, the peoples of South Africa resemble the ingredients of a pudding when they are in the process of being stirred together in a basin: plums, eggs, wine, flour, and water. To hope to re-sort them is vain; for good or for evil, the mixture is made; they have so permeated each other's substance that again to re-sort them is impossible, however much we may wish it. We can only go on further.

Looking, then, at South Africa as a whole, the thought forces itself on us: "Are the South Africans fated forever to remain an inchoate, shapeless mass of human particles, politically split up into artificial states, severed from each other by lines of racial scorn and

opposition, and devoid of that national existence which is the matrix in which alone the full development of the individual takes place?" We believe that no man can impartially study the social and political condition of the South Africa of to-day without coming to the conclusion that there is one, and only one, form of healthful national organization open to us. Across the face of the whole map of South Africa there is no line which can be drawn which would stand for a healthy, natural line of division; it would be a line dividing homogeneous substances, not uniting them. There is one form, and one only, of crystallization possible to us—we must form one large, united whole. This is at once simpler and easier than would be the organization of any division alone; and this alone can give us the power of dealing with our subtler internal difficulties. South African unity is not the dream of the visionary and the enthusiast; it is not even like that splendid vision of the first Napoleon[3] of a unified Europe, which failed because dreamed five hundred years before its time; it is a condition the necessity for which is daily and hourly forced upon us by the practical needs of life; it is the one possible course which offers any solution of our social and political difficulties; it is the one course open to us. It is for this unity that all great men born in South Africa will be compelled to labour during the next sixty years; it must precede the production of anything great and beautiful by our people as a whole. Neither art, nor science, nor literature, nor state-craft will flourish among us as long as we remain in our inchoate, divided form.

For the moment the most pressing and absorbing aspect of this union is the combination of our artificial and jarring political states into a harmonious political whole. It is a change many men now living will probably see accomplished; and so ripe is the time for it, and so obvious the necessity for it, that it may be with us before the decade is out. No man can study closely the conditions of the South Africa of to-day and the forces that are at work upon it without the conviction being forced upon him that within the next thirty years at least there will exist in South Africa a great central government, the embodiment of the united political aspirations and desires of the

people; that our State divisions will be relegated to the performance of their normal and valuable function of internal sub-government.

But there is another aspect of the question of union more subtle and more vital, though for the moment less obtrusive. A central government, political unity, customs union, a common treasury, are but the shell in which the vital unity must be contained if South Africa is ever to become not simply a large, but a great and progressive nation.

The question which surpasses all others in importance to us, is, "Can we make of our opposed and conflicting races a socially harmonious and united whole?" If we cannot so organize our conflicting elements, that should a foreign foe land on South African shores, and six men were left to defend them—two of English, two of Dutch, and two of Native extraction—if those six men would not stand shoulder to shoulder fighting for their land—then, however large, rich, populous South Africa may become, we shall never be able to look free, united peoples in the face.

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A RETURNED SOUTH AFRICAN.

1896



THE RHODES COLOSSUS

STRIDING FROM CAPE TOWN TO CAIRO.

Cecil Rhodes (1853–1902) was an ardent imperialist and white supremacist who served as prime minister of the Cape Colony from 1890 to 1896. He was responsible for the theft of large tracts of land from Indigenous people of southern Africa

and for instituting laws that insured their disenfranchisement. The image above refers to his efforts to establish a railway that would extend from the Cape to Cairo through British territory.

Endnotes

- Note 1: The Cape Colony officially became a British colony in 1815. This move partially displaced Dutch farmers (Boers) in the area. It also exacerbated long-standing tensions between the Boers, the Xhosa, and the Zulu.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Indigenous member of the Bantu nation in southern Africa; “Zulu”: a Nguni ethnic group in southern Africa; “half slave”: Slavery in South Africa began with the establishment of the Dutch Cape Colony in 1653 and lasted until the British abolition of slavery in all its colonies in 1834; “Kafir”: 19th-century term for Indigenous Africans, now a racial slur.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821), French military and political leader, emperor of the French Empire from 1804 to 1814 and again in 1815.Return to reference 3

British Isles: Ireland, Scotland, Wales

By the beginning of Victoria's reign, the United Kingdom could be regarded either as extremely longstanding or as relatively recent. The 1707 Acts of Union brought together the kingdoms of England, Wales, and Scotland. Meanwhile, the king of England had also been king of Ireland since 1603. At the same time, however, Great Britain was not merged into the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland until the Acts of Union of 1800, and the Catholic majority of Ireland was not allowed to vote, hold public office, or purchase or inherit property until 1829. What these restrictions meant in literary and political terms is that although they formed a single political entity, England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales all retained very distinct political, cultural, and religious identities. They also maintained differing relations to the central government. The example of Ireland is the most striking and the most tragic: the decimation of the potato harvest by blight caused a famine that ultimately claimed approximately 1 million lives and forced approximately two million to emigrate. Mismanagement on the part of Parliament was widely blamed for at least some of the misery.

As the selections in this section suggest, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales each possessed a distinct cultural identity. And for the Irish, in particular, this meant a distinct political identity as well.

SPERANZA [LADY JANE FRANCESCA WILDE]

Lady Jane Francesca Wilde (1821–1896) may be best known as Oscar Wilde's mother, but she was a poet, folklorist, and political activist in her own right. After her husband's death left her impoverished, she sought to support herself with her writings. Her pen name, Speranza, means "hope" in Italian. Wilde was a passionate Irish nationalist who participated in the "Young Ireland" movement, at one point going so far as to call for armed revolution against the British. She was also an advocate of women's rights. "The Famine Year" was written to condemn the failure of the British government to relieve the Irish famine. Wilde criticized the British not just for their inaction but for their continuing importation of Irish grain and other foodstuffs.

The Famine Year

I

Weary men, what reap ye?—Golden corn for the stranger.
What sow ye?—Human corses[1] that wait for the avenger.
Fainting forms, hunger-stricken, what see you in the offing?
Stately ships to bear our food away,[2] amid the stranger's scoffing.
There's a proud array of soldiers—what do they round your door?
They guard our masters' granaries from the thin hands of the poor.
Pale mothers, wherefore weeping?—Would to God that we were dead—
Our children swoon before us, and we cannot give them bread.

II

Little children, tears are strange upon your infant faces,
God meant you but to smile within your mother's soft embraces.
Oh! we know not what is smiling, and we know not what is dying;
But we're hungry, very hungry, and we cannot stop our crying.
And some of us grow cold and white—we know not what it means;
But, as they lie beside us, we tremble in our dreams.
There's a gaunt crowd on the highway—are ye come to pray to man,
With hollow eyes that cannot weep, and for words your faces wan?

III

No; the blood is dead within our veins—we care not now for life;
Let us die hid in the ditches, far from children and from wife;
We cannot stay and listen to their raving, famished cries—
Bread! Bread! Bread! and none to still their agonies.
We left our infants playing with their dead mother's hand:
We left our maidens maddened by the fever's scorching brand:
Better, maiden, thou were strangled in thy own dark-twisted tresses—
Better, infant, thou wert smothered in thy mother's first caresses.

IV

We are fainting in our misery, but God will hear our groan;

Yet, if fellow-men desert us, will He hearken from His Throne?
Accursed are we in our own land, yet toil we still and toil;
But the stranger reaps our harvest—the alien owns our soil.
O Christ! how have we sinned, that on our native plains
We perish houseless, naked, starved, with branded brow, like Cain's?[3]
Dying, dying wearily, with a torture sure and slow—
Dying, as a dog would die, by the wayside as we go.

V

One by one they're falling round us, their pale faces to the sky;
We've no strength left to dig them graves—there let them lie.
The wild bird, if he's stricken, is mourned by the others,
But we—we die in Christian land—we die amid our brothers,
In the land which God has given, like a wild beast in his cave,
Without a tear, a prayer, a shroud, a coffin, or a grave.
Ha! but think ye the contortions on each livid face ye see,
Will not be read on judgment-day by eyes of Deity?

VI

We are wretches, famished, scorned, human tools to build your pride,
But God will yet take vengeance for the souls for whom Christ died.
Now is your hour of pleasure—bask ye in the world's caress;
But our whitening bones against ye will arise as witnesses,
From the cabins and the ditches, in their charred, uncoffin'd masses,
For the Angel of the Trumpet[4] will know them as he passes.
A ghastly, spectral army, before the great God we'll stand,
And arraign ye as our murderers, the spoilers of our land.

1847

Endnotes

- Note 1: Corpses.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: One of the possible causes of the Irish famine was the exportation of Irish grain to England.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: God marked Cain after he murdered his brother.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: The angel who blows the trumpet to signal the Day of Judgment.Return to reference 4

ANONYMOUS

In 1845 potato blight severely damaged the crop in Ireland. Its return over the next several years caused widespread famine and disease. The British government's wholly inadequate response to the famine, which included exporting grain from Ireland while Irish people starved, contributed to the long-standing bitterness against British rule. Some Irish people came together in 1858 to advocate the use of force to liberate Ireland; taking their name from a group of legendary Irish warriors, they called themselves the Fenians, or Irish Republican Brotherhood, forerunners of the Irish Republican Army. Often thwarted by British infiltration of their ranks, the Fenians organized a rebellion in March 1867 that the British easily quelled. *The Nation*, a newspaper established in 1842 to promote Irish self-government, published the following statement around the time of that uprising.

Proclamation of an Irish Republic

The Irish People to the World

We have suffered centuries of outrage, enforced poverty, and bitter misery. Our rights and liberties have been trampled on by an alien aristocracy, who, treating us as foes, usurped our lands, and drew away from our unfortunate country all material riches. The real owners of the soil were removed to make room for cattle, and driven across the ocean to seek the means of living, and the political rights denied to them at home, while our men of thought and action were condemned to loss of life and liberty. But we never lost the memory and hope of a national existence. We appealed in vain to the reason and sense of justice of the dominant powers.

Our mildest remonstrances were met with sneers and contempt. Our appeals to arms were always unsuccessful.

To-day, having no honourable alternative left, we again appeal to force as our last resource. We accept the conditions of appeal, manfully deeming it better to die in the struggle for freedom than to continue an existence of utter serfdom.

All men are born with equal rights, and in associating to protect one another and share public burthens, justice demands that such associations should rest upon a basis which maintains equality instead of destroying it.

We therefore declare that, unable longer to endure the curse of Monarchical Government, we aim at founding a Republic based on universal suffrage, which shall secure to all the intrinsic value of their labour.

The soil of Ireland, at present in the possession of an oligarchy, belongs to us, the Irish people, and to us it must be restored.

We declare, also, in favour of absolute liberty of conscience, and the complete separation of Church and State.

We appeal to the Highest Tribunal for evidence of the justness of our cause. History bears testimony to the intensity of our sufferings, and we declare, in the face of our brethren, that we intend no war against the people of England—our war is against the aristocratic locusts, whether English or Irish, who have eaten the verdure of our fields—against the aristocratic leeches who drain alike our fields and theirs.

Republicans of the entire world, our cause is your cause. Our enemy is your enemy. Let your hearts be with us. As for you, workmen of England, it is not only your hearts we wish, but your arms. Remember the starvation and degradation brought to your firesides by the oppression of labour. Remember the past, look well to the future, and avenge yourselves by giving liberty to your children in the coming struggle for human liberty.

Herewith we proclaim the Irish Republic,

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT.

1867

MATTHEW ARNOLD

The following selection comes from a series of lectures on Celtic literature delivered by Matthew Arnold (1822–1888) in his capacity as professor of poetry at Oxford University. From the eighteenth century onward, the word *Celtic* had been used as a descriptor of the family of languages that included Welsh, Cornish, Irish, and Gaelic. In a slippage from language to ethnicity or "race" that was common in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the term *Celt* was frequently applied to anyone who spoke (or was descended from those who spoke) a Celtic language. The following exposition on the distinctive features of "the Celt" connects to Arnold's broader interest in national identities. As the critic Lionel Trilling remarked in his 1949 study, "Arnold was at pains to show that the English are an amalgam of several 'bloods'—German, Norman, Celtic"; each of these distinctive "bloods," or races, in Arnold's opinion, required the balance of the others to constitute a truly successful national character. At the end of his lectures, Arnold called on Oxford to create a professorship of Celtic "to send . . . a message of peace to Ireland."

From On the Study of Celtic Literature

And as in material civilisation he has been ineffectual, so has the Celt been ineffectual in politics. This colossal, impetuous, adventurous wanderer, the Titan of the early world, who in primitive times fills so large a place on earth's scene, dwindles and dwindles as history goes on, and at last is shrunk to what we now see him. For ages and ages the world has been constantly slipping, ever more and more, out of the Celt's grasp. "They went forth to the war," Ossian says most truly, *"but they always fell."*[1]

And yet, if one sets about constituting an ideal genius, what a great deal of the Celt does one find oneself drawn to put into it! Of an ideal genius one does not want the elements, any of them, to be in a state of weakness; on the contrary, one wants all of them to be in the highest state of power; but with a law of measure, of harmony, presiding over the whole. So the sensibility[2] of the Celt, if everything else were not sacrificed to it, is a beautiful and admirable force. For sensibility, the power of quick and strong perception and emotion, is one of the very prime constituents of genius, perhaps its most positive constituent; it is to the soul what good senses are to the body, the grand natural condition of successful activity. Sensibility gives genius its materials; one cannot have too much of it, if one can but keep its master and not be its slave. Do not let us wish that the Celt had had less sensibility, but that he had been more master of it. Even as it is, if his sensibility has been a source of weakness to him, it has been a source of power too, and a source of happiness. Some people have found in the Celtic nature and its sensibility the main root out of which chivalry and romance and the glorification of a feminine ideal spring; this is a great question, with which I cannot deal here. Let me notice in passing, however, that there is, in truth, a Celtic air about the extravagance of chivalry, its reaction against the despotism of fact, its straining human nature

further than it will stand. But putting all this question of chivalry and its origin on one side, no doubt the sensibility of the Celtic nature, its nervous exaltation, have something feminine in them, and the Celt is thus peculiarly[3] disposed to feel the spell of the feminine idiosyncrasy; he has an affinity to it; he is not far from its secret. Again, his sensibility gives him a peculiarly near and intimate feeling of nature and the life of nature; here, too, he seems in a special way attracted by the secret before him, the secret of natural beauty and natural magic, and to be close to it, to half-divine it. In the productions of the Celtic genius, nothing, perhaps, is so interesting as the evidences of this power: I shall have occasion to give specimens of them by-and-by. The same sensibility made the Celts full of reverence and enthusiasm for genius, learning, and the things of the mind; *to be a bard, freed a man,*—that is a characteristic stroke of this generous and ennobling ardour of theirs, which no race has ever shown more strongly. Even the extravagance and exaggeration of the sentimental Celtic nature has often something romantic and attractive about it, something which has a sort of smack of misdirected good. The Celt, undisciplinable, anarchical, and turbulent by nature, but out of affection and admiration giving himself body and soul to some leader, that is not a promising political temperament, it is just the opposite of the Anglo-Saxon temperament, disciplinable and steadily obedient within certain limits, but retaining an inalienable part of freedom and self-dependence; but it is a temperament for which one has a kind of sympathy notwithstanding. And very often, for the gay defiant reaction against fact of the lively Celtic nature one has more than sympathy; one feels, in spite of the extravagance, in spite of good sense disapproving, magnetised and exhilarated by it. The Gauls[4] had a rule inflicting a fine on every warrior who, when he appeared on parade, was found to stick out too much in front,—to be corpulent, in short. Such a rule is surely the maddest article of war ever framed, and to people to whom nature has assigned a large volume of intestines, must appear, no doubt, horrible; but yet has it

not an udacious, sparkling, immaterial manner with it, which lifts one out of routine, and sets one's spirits in a glow?

All tendencies of human nature are in themselves vital and profitable; when they are blamed, they are only to be blamed relatively, not absolutely. This holds true of the Saxon's phlegm as well as of the Celt's sentiment. Out of the steady humdrum habit of the creeping Saxon, as the Celt calls him,—out of his way of going near the ground,—has come, no doubt, Philistinism,[5] that plant of essentially Germanic growth, flourishing with its genuine marks only in the German fatherland, Great Britain and her colonies, and the United States of America; but what a soul of goodness there is in Philistinism itself! and this soul of goodness I, who am often supposed to be Philistinism's mortal enemy merely because I do not wish it to have things all its own way, cherish as much as anybody. This steady-going habit leads at last, as I have said, up to science, up to the comprehension and interpretation of the world. With us in Great Britain, it is true, it does not seem to lead so far as that; it is in Germany, where the habit is more unmixed, that it can lead to science. Here with us it seems at a certain point to meet with a conflicting force, which checks it and prevents its pushing on to science; but before reaching this point what conquests has it not won! and all the more, perhaps, for stopping short at this point, for spending its exertions within a bounded field, the field of plain sense, of direct practical utility. How it has augmented the comforts and conveniences of life for us! Doors that open, windows that shut, locks that turn, razors that shave, coats that wear, watches that go, and a thousand more such good things, are the invention of the Philistines.

1867

Endnotes

- Note 1: A quotation from the poem "Cath-Loda," one of the works that the Scottish poet James Macpherson (1736–1796)

claimed to have translated from the Gaelic writings of Ossian, a 3rd-century poet-warrior figure in traditional Irish folklore. A committee of scholars appointed in 1797 determined that the prose poems were largely composed by Macpherson.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Susceptibility to emotional influence.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Especially.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The name given by the Romans to a Celtic people living in modern-day France.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A label Arnold repeatedly uses for the attitude of the unenlightened middle classes of his time, in whose opposition to the defenders of culture he sees a resemblance to the biblical tribe who fought against the people of Israel, "the children of light."Return to reference 5

JANET HAMILTON

Janet Hamilton (1795–1873) was a self-taught Scottish poet and essayist. She began work as a lacemaker at nine, married at thirteen, and gave birth to ten children, but nevertheless published four volumes of poetry and essays. At one point she was probably Scotland's most widely read working-class poet. Much of her poetry is unsparing in its criticism of political leaders' failure to address the needs of the common people. In "Rhymes for the Times" (1865) she focuses on the environmental degradation caused by mining. She also references debates over Sunday railway travel, a topic of great concern at the time.

Rhymes for the Times

IV.—*1865.*

Juist noo° there are mony wha rin° to an' fro,
An' knowledge increases, abune° an' below;
The yird's° like a riddle, pits, tunnels, an' bores,
Whaur bodies, like mowdies,° by hunners an'
scores°
Are houkin',° an' holin',° an' blastin' the rocks;
An' droonin's° an' burnin's, explosions an' shocks,
An' a' ither meagries,° amang us are rife;
Oh, mony's the slain in the battle o' life!
It's Mammon° we worship, wi' graspin' an' greed,
Wi' sailin' an' railin' at telegraph speed,
Get gowd° oot the ironstane,° an' siller° frae coal,
An' thoosan's on thoosan's draw oot o' ae hole.
Wi' oil shale[1] aneath us, an' fire-warks abune,
I think we'll tak' lowe,° an' bleeze up to the mune.°
The kintra's° contentit° an' hale at the heart;
That gleg birkie,° Gladstone,[2] has weel dune his part;
Exchequer's big pouches o' siller are fu',
An' mony's the taxes that's dune awa' noo;
An' labour's weel paid, an' the flour an' the meal
At a wanworth°—an' sae we micht fen° unco° weel.°
Oor Premier[3] has promised to stan' for reform;
The Fins an' the Yankees are brewin' a storm,
They're swallin'° an' frothin' wi' bunkum an' bosh,°
But they daurna come near oor bit islan' sae cosh.°
There's a bee in the bannet o' some o' the cloth,°
The Sabbath's the subject,[4] an' wow but I'm wroth°
To see the blin' leaders lead blin' men awa',
Till into the ditch they baith stummle an' fa'.°
"The soul is immortal," tak' that for a text,
"The body is perishin'," tak' for the next;
To whilk° o' the twa shou'd the Sabbath be given?

To the body?—then what for the soul an’ for heaven?

1865

Endnotes

- Note 1: Sedimentary rock containing kerogen, from which oil can be made.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: William Ewart Gladstone (1809–1898) was a British statesman, member of Parliament, and eventual prime minister in 1868. He became Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1852; in this role he was responsible for collecting and managing taxes.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Lord Palmerston (1784–1865), prime minister of the United Kingdom from 1855 to 1858 and from 1859 to 1865.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Refers to debates over whether to allow train travel on Sundays.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *now* Return to reference °
- °: *wandering*Return to reference °
- °: *above*Return to reference °
- °: *earth or ground*Return to reference °
- °: *moles*Return to reference °
- °: *hundreds and twenties*Return to reference °
- °: *digging* Return to reference °
- °: *hauling*Return to reference °
- °: *drowning*Return to reference °
- °: *mishaps*Return to reference °
- °: *wealth*Return to reference °
- °: *gold* Return to reference °
- °: *stone rich in iron* Return to reference °
- °: *silver*Return to reference °
- °: *catch fire* Return to reference °
- °: *moon*Return to reference °
- °: *country is* Return to reference °

- °: *content* Return to reference °
- °: *smart man* Return to reference °
- °: *worthless* Return to reference °
- °: *feel* Return to reference °
- °: *strange* Return to reference °
- °: *well* Return to reference °
- °: *swelling* Return to reference °
- °: *nonsense* Return to reference °
- °: *snug, comfortable* Return to reference °
- °: *clergy* Return to reference °
- °: *angry* Return to reference °
- °: *faint* Return to reference °
- °: *which* Return to reference °

THOMAS CARLYLE
1795–1881

W . B. Yeats once asked William Morris which writers had inspired the socialist movement of the 1880s, and Morris replied: "Oh, Ruskin and Carlyle, but somebody should have been beside Carlyle and punched his head every five minutes." Morris's mixed feelings of admiration and fury are typical of both nineteenth-century and contemporary readers. Carlyle's prose is vivid and energetic, even as it occasionally borders on the incomprehensible. His rejection of the replacement of personal responsibility with what he termed "machinery" was prescient in certain ways. But at the same time, he believed that some men (and for him "men" refers only to male persons) are born to lead and others are born to follow. If followers fail to recognize their destiny, it is the responsibility of leaders to enforce it. Leaders have other responsibilities as well: for example, they have a moral duty to support and protect their dependents. Even for critics of Carlyle's authoritarianism, this emphasis on the importance of human relations could be very attractive. Less attractive is his insistence that it is not the place of those dependents to question the leaders' wisdom. Breakdowns will sometimes occur—hence, the tragedy of the French Revolution, when oppressed peasants overthrew a corrupt aristocracy. But true leaders will tolerate no opposition. (This view finds perhaps its fullest expression in "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question," excerpted above.)

Carlyle was born in Ecclefechan, a village in Scotland, the eldest child of a large family. At the time of her marriage, his mother, Margaret Aitken Carlyle, was illiterate. His father, James Carlyle, a stonemason and later a farmer, was proudly described by his son as a peasant. Frugality, hard work, a tender but undemonstrative family loyalty, and a peculiar blend of self-denial and self-righteousness were characteristic features of Carlyle's childhood home. With his father's aid, Carlyle was educated at Annan Academy and the University of Edinburgh, with a focus on mathematics. He left school without taking a degree. His parents hoped their son would become a clergyman, but his exposure to such skeptical writers as David Hume, Voltaire, and Edward Gibbon undermined his faith.

During the period in which Carlyle was thinking through his religious position, he supported himself by teaching school in Scotland and, later, by tutoring private pupils; from 1824 to the end of his life he relied exclusively on his writings for his livelihood. His early writings consisted of translations, biographies, and critical studies of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and other German authors, to whose view of life he was deeply attracted. Aided by the writings of these German poets and philosophers, he arrived finally at a faith in life that served as a substitute for the Christian faith he had lost.

After many years of relative obscurity, the tide turned in 1837 when he published *The French Revolution.* "O it has been a great success, dear," his wife assured him, but Carlyle, embittered by the long struggle, was incredulous that recognition had at last come to him. It was in character for his wife, Jane Welsh Carlyle, to be less surprised by his success than he was. A witty, intelligent, and intellectually ambitious young woman who had hoped to become a writer herself, she wanted to marry a man of genius who would change the world. Despite the years of comparative poverty, poor health, and loneliness, she had the satisfaction of recognizing her husband's triumph when the peasant's son she had chosen returned to Scotland to deliver his inaugural address as lord rector of Edinburgh University in 1866.

During the first thirty years of his residence in London, Carlyle wrote extensive historical works and many pamphlets concerning contemporary issues. Following the sudden death of his wife in 1866, which happened while he was in Scotland, he wrote little. Instead, he confined himself to reading or to talking to the stream of visitors who called at his home in Cheyne Walk to listen to the "Sage of Chelsea," as he came to be called. In 1874 he accepted the Prussian Order of Merit from Bismarck, the German chancellor, but declined an English baronetcy offered by Prime Minister Disraeli. In 1881 he died and was buried near his family in Ecclefechan churchyard.

To understand Carlyle's role as historian, biographer, and social critic, it is essential to understand his attitude toward religion. While many of his contemporaries who experienced similar crises of religious belief adopted antispiritual ideas, Carlyle never lost his conviction of the importance of the divine. In his early work, *Sartor Resartus* (1836), he used the metaphor of the "Clothes Philosophy" to describe the evolution of religious belief. The naked individual seeks clothing—belief—for protection. In the current age, the traditional Christian coverings were worn out—"Hebrew Old Clothes," he called them. His solution, described in "The Everlasting Yea" section of *Sartor Resartus*, was to tailor a new suit of beliefs from German philosophy, shreds of the Scottish Calvinism with which he had been raised, and his own observations. Carlyle was thus in many ways the quintessential nineteenth-century mystic; yet at the same time, many critics note, his writings also gesture toward postmodernism. His self-aware, genre-defying, and often contradictory prose exposes the inherent difficulty of assuming that literature or philosophy can ever achieve a unified, foundational truth.

One of the more attractive aspects of Carlyle's writings is his "vitalism"—that is, his apparent conviction that the presence of energy in the world is, in itself, a sign of the godhead. Carlyle judges everything in terms of the presence or absence of some vital spark. The minds of people, books, societies, churches, or even landscapes

are rated as alive or dead, dynamic or merely mechanical. The government of Louis XVI, for example, was obviously declining, doomed to be swept away by the dynamic forces of the French Revolution. The government of Victorian England seemed likewise to be doomed unless infused with vital energies of leadership and an awareness of the real needs of humankind. When an editor complained that his essay "Characteristics" was "inscrutable," Carlyle remarked: "My own fear was that it might be too *scrutable*; for it indicates decisively enough that Society (in my view) is utterly condemned to destruction, and even now beginning its long travail-throes of Newbirth."

At a moment when many readers were seeking alternatives or supplements to orthodox religion, what have come to be known as "Sage Writers"—lay writers who asserted their authority to speak on important ethical and spiritual issues—provided guidance and reassurance to many readers. Sage Writing is often marked by the attempt to channel the rhetorical authority of religious texts, but even among writers such as George Eliot and Matthew Arnold, Carlyle's prose is especially idiosyncratic, dense with religious and cultural references and studded with neologisms (made-up words). Carlyle's prose style reflects the intensity of his views. Like a poet, he wanted to convey the sense of experience itself. Like a preacher or prophet, he wanted to exhort or inspire his readers rather than to develop a logical argument. To this end he developed his highly individual manner of writing, with its vivid imagery of fire and barnyard and zoo, its mixture of biblical rhythms and explosive talk, and its inverted and unorthodox syntax. As Eliot wrote in 1855, Carlyle was "more of an artist than a philosopher." As she said: "No novelist has made his creations live for us more thoroughly." Carlyle is best regarded, that is, as a man of letters, the inventor of a distinctive and extremely effective prose medium, and one who strove tirelessly to create a new spiritual and political philosophy adequate to the age.

In his inquiry into the principles of government and social order, Carlyle, like many of his contemporaries, sought to understand a

world of great social unrest and historical change. This preoccupation with revolution and the destruction of the old orders suggests that Carlyle's politics were radical, but his position is difficult to classify. During the Hungry Forties—a period of widespread famine caused by economic depression and poor harvests—he was one of the most outspoken critics of middle-class bungling and of the laissez-faire economics that he saw as responsible for that bungling. He worked strenuously on behalf of the millions of people suffering from the miseries that followed a major breakdown of industry and agriculture. At the same time, he rejected the democratic assumption that all people are equally capable of choice and that the masses value liberty more than they value order. Some of his highest praise is reserved for dictators, such as Oliver Cromwell, or perpetrators of racist violence, such as Governor Edward Eyre. (see p. 75, above).

Carlyle's work was extraordinarily influential during his lifetime, but that does not mean that readers followed him uncritically. At his best, he provided impassioned pleas for the sacredness of the bonds between persons and within communities; at his worst, his racism seems like an outgrowth of a broad commitment to the fundamental differences between "kinds" of people—those who should be allowed to determine their own lives, and those whose labor is more valuable than any right to self-determination.

From Signs of the Times

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Were we required to characterise this age of ours by any single epithet, we should be tempted to call it, not an Heroical, Devotional, Philosophical, or Moral Age, but, above all others, the Mechanical Age. It is the Age of Machinery, in every outward and inward sense of that word; the age which, with its whole undivided might, forwards, teaches, and practises the great art of adapting means to ends. Nothing is now done directly, or by hand; all is by rule and calculated contrivance. For the simplest operation, some helps and accompaniments, some cunning, abbreviating process is in readiness. Our old modes of exertion are all discredited, and thrown aside. On every hand, the living artisan is driven from his workshop, to make room for a speedier, inanimate one. The shuttle drops from the fingers of the weaver, and falls into iron fingers that ply it faster. The sailor furls his sail, and lays down his oar, and bids a strong, unwearied servant, on vaporous wings, bear him through the waters. Men have crossed oceans by steam; the Birmingham Fire-king[1] has visited the fabulous East; and the genius of the Cape, were there any Camoens[2] now to sing it, has again been alarmed, and with far stranger thunders than Gama's.[3] There is no end to machinery. Even the horse is stripped of his harness, and finds a fleet fire-horse[4] yoked in his stead. Nay, we have an artist that hatches chickens by steam—the very brood-hen is to be superseded! For all earthly, and for some unearthly purposes, we have machines and mechanic furtherances; for mincing our cabbages; for casting us into magnetic sleep.[5] We remove mountains, and make seas our smooth highway; nothing can resist us. We war with rude nature; and, by our resistless engines, come off always victorious, and loaded with spoils.

What wonderful accessions have thus been made, and are still making, to the physical power of mankind; how much better fed, clothed, lodged, and, in all outward respects, accommodated, men now are, or might be, by a given quantity of labour, is a grateful reflection which forces itself on every one. What changes, too, this addition of power is introducing into the social system; how wealth has more and more increased, and at the same time gathered itself more and more into masses, strangely altering the old relations, and increasing the distance between the rich and the poor, will be a question for Political Economists—and a much more complex and important one than any they have yet engaged with. But leaving these matters for the present, let us observe how the mechanical genius of our time has diffused itself into quite other provinces. Not the external and physical alone is now managed by machinery, but the internal and spiritual also. Here, too, nothing follows its spontaneous course, nothing is left to be accomplished by old, natural methods. Every thing has its cunningly devised implements, its pre-established apparatus; it is not done by hand, but by machinery. Thus we have machines for Education: Lancastrian machines;[6] Hamiltonian machines[7]—Monitors, maps, and emblems. Instruction, that mysterious communing of Wisdom with Ignorance, is no longer an indefinable tentative process, requiring a study of individual aptitudes, and a perpetual variation of means and methods, to attain the same end; but a secure, universal, straight-forward business, to be conducted in the gross, by proper mechanism, with such intellect as comes to hand. Then, we have Religious machines, of all imaginable varieties—the Bible Society,[8] professing a far higher and heavenly structure, is found, on enquiry, to be altogether an earthly contrivance, supported by collection of monies, by fomenting of vanities, by puffing, intrigue, and chicane—and yet, in effect, a very excellent machine for converting the heathen. It is the same in all other departments. Has any man, or any society of men, a truth to speak, a piece of spiritual work to do, they can nowise proceed at once, and with the mere natural organs, but must first call a public meeting, appoint committees, issue

prospectuses, eat a public dinner; in a word, construct or borrow machinery, wherewith to speak it and do it. Without machinery they were hopeless, helpless—a colony of Hindoo weavers squatting in the heart of Lancashire.[9] Then every machine must have its moving power, in some of the great currents of society: Every little sect among us, Unitarians, Utilitarians, Anabaptists, Phrenologists,[1] must each have its periodical, its monthly or quarterly magazine—hanging out, like its windmill, into the *popularis aura,*[2] to grind meal for the society.

With individuals, in like manner, natural strength avails little. No individual now hopes to accomplish the poorest enterprise single-handed, and without mechanical aids; he must make interest with some existing corporation, and till his field with their oxen. In these days, more emphatically than ever, 'to live, signifies to unite with a party, or to make one.' Philosophy, Science, Art, Literature, all depend on machinery. No Newton,[3] by silent meditation, now discovers the system of the world from the falling of an apple; but some quite other than Newton stands in his Museum, his Scientific Institution, and behind whole batteries of retorts, digesters, and galvanic piles,[4] imperatively 'interrogates Nature,'—who, however, shows no haste to answer. In defect of Raphaels, and Angelos, and Mozarts,[5] we have Royal Academies of Painting, Sculpture, Music;[6] whereby the languishing spirit of Art may be strengthened by the more generous diet of a Public Kitchen. Literature, too, has its Paternoster-row[7] mechanism, its Trade dinners, its Editorial conclaves, and huge subterranean, puffing bellows; so that books are not only printed, but, in a great measure, written and sold, by machinery. National culture, spiritual benefit of all sorts, is under the same management. No Queen Christina,[8] in these times, needs to send for her Descartes: no King Frederick[9] for his Voltaire, and painfully nourish him with pensions and flattery: But any sovereign of taste, who wishes to enlighten his people, has only to impose a new tax, and with the proceeds establish Philosophic Institutes. Hence the Royal and Imperial Societies, the Bibliothèques,

Glypcothèques, Sechnothèques,[1] which front us in all capital cities, like so many well-finished hives, to which it is expected the stray agencies of Wisdom will swarm of their own accord, and hive and make honey. In like manner, among ourselves, when it is thought that religion is declining, we have only to vote half a million's worth of bricks and mortar, and build new churches. In Ireland, it seems they have gone still farther—having actually established a 'Penny-a-week Purgatory Society!'[2] Thus does the Genius of Mechanism stand by to help us in all difficulties and emergencies; and, with his iron back, bears all our burdens.

These things, which we state lightly enough here, are yet of deep import, and indicate a mighty change in our whole manner of existence. For the same habit regulates, not our modes of action alone, but our modes of thought and feeling. Men are grown mechanical in head and in heart, as well as in hand. They have lost faith in individual endeavour, and in natural force, of any kind. Not for internal perfection, but for external combinations and arrangements, for institutions, constitutions—for Mechanism of one sort or other, do they hope and struggle. Their whole efforts, attachments, opinions, turn on mechanism, and are of a mechanical character.

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Or, to take an infinitely higher instance, that of the Christian Religion, which, under every theory of it, in the believing or the unbelieving mind, must ever be regarded as the crowning glory, or rather the life and soul, of our whole modern culture: How did Christianity arise and spread abroad among men? Was it by institutions and establishments, and well-arranged systems of mechanism? Not so; on the contrary, in all past and existing institutions for those ends, its divine spirit has invariably been found to languish and decay. It arose in the mystic deeps of man's soul; and was spread abroad by the 'preaching of the word,' by simple, altogether natural and individual efforts; and flew, like hallowed fire,

from heart to heart, till all were purified and illuminated by it; and its heavenly light shone, as it still shines, and as sun or star will ever shine, through the whole dark destinies of man. Here again was no Mechanism; man's highest attainment was accomplished, Dynamically, not Mechanically. Nay, we will venture to say that no high attainment, not even any far-extending movement among men, was ever accomplished otherwise. Strange as it may seem, if we read History with any degree of thoughtfulness, we shall find, that the checks and balances of Profit and Loss have never been the grand agents with men; that they have never been roused into deep, thorough, all-pervading efforts by any computable prospect of Profit and Loss, for any visible, finite object; but always for some invisible and infinite one. The Crusades[3] took their rise in Religion; their visible object was, commercially speaking, worth nothing. It was the boundless, Invisible world that was laid bare in the imaginations of those men; and in its burning light, the visible shrunk as a scroll. Not mechanical, nor produced by mechanical means, was this vast movement. No dining at Freemasons' Tavern,[4] with the other long train of modern machinery; no cunning reconciliation of 'vested interests,' was required here: only the passionate voice of one man, the rapt soul looking through the eyes of one man; and rugged, steel-clad Europe trembled beneath his words, and followed him whither he listed. In later ages, it was still the same. The Reformation had an invisible, mystic, and ideal aim: the result was indeed to be embodied in external things; but its spirit, its worth, was internal, invisible, infinite. Our English Revolution,[5] too, originated in Religion. Men did battle, even in those days, not for Purse sake, but for Conscience sake. Nay, in our own days, it is no way different. The French Revolution[6] itself had something higher in it than cheap bread and a Habeascorpus act.[7] Here, too, was an Idea; a Dynamic, not a Mechanic force. It was a struggle, though a blind and at last an insane one, for the infinite, divine nature of Right, of Freedom, of Country.

Thus does man, in every age, vindicate, consciously or unconsciously, his celestial birthright. Thus does nature hold on her

wondrous, unquestionable course; and all our systems and theories are but so many froth-eddies or sand-banks, which from time to time she casts up and washes away. When we can drain the Ocean into our mill-ponds, and bottle up the Force of Gravity, to be sold by retail, in our gas-jars; then may we hope to comprehend the infinitudes of man's soul under formulas of Profit and Loss; and rule over this too, as over a patent engine, by checks, and valves, and balances.

Nay, even with regard to Government itself, can it be necessary to remind any one that Freedom, without which indeed all spiritual life is impossible, depends on infinitely more complex influences than either the extension or the curtailment of the 'democratic interest?'[8] Who is there that 'taking the high '*priori*[9] road,' shall point out what these influences are; what deep, subtle, inextricably entangled influences they have been, and may be? For man is not the creature and product of Mechanism; but, in a far truer sense, its creator and producer: it is the noble people that makes the noble Government; rather than conversely. On the whole, Institutions are much; but they are not all. The freest and highest spirits of the world have often been found under strange outward circumstances; Saint Paul and his brother Apostles were politically slaves;[1] Epictetus was personally one. Again, forget the influences of Chivalry and Religion, and ask,—what countries produced Columbus and Las Casas?[2] Or, descending from virtue and heroism, to mere energy and spiritual talent; Cortes, Pizarro, Alba, Ximenes?[3] The Spaniards of the sixteenth century were indisputably the noblest nation of Europe; yet they had the Inquisition,[4] and Philip II. They have the same government at this day; and are the lowest nation. The Dutch, too, have retained their old constitution; but no Siege of Leyden, no William the Silent, not even an Egmont or De Witt,[5] any longer appear among them. With ourselves, also, where much has changed, effect has nowise followed cause, as it should have done: two centuries ago, the Commons' Speaker[6] addressed Queen Elizabeth on bended knees, happy that the virago's foot did not even smite him; yet the people were then governed, not by a Castlereagh

but by a Burghley;[7] they had their Shakspeare and Philip Sidney,[8] where we have our Sheridan Knowles and Beau Brummel.

These and the like facts are so familiar, the truths which they preach so obvious, and have in all past times been so universally believed and acted on, that we should almost feel ashamed for repeating them; were it not that, on every hand, the memory of them seems to have passed away, or at best died into a faint tradition, of no value as a practical principle. To judge by the loud clamour of our Constitution-builders, Statists, Economists, directors, creators, reformers of Public Societies; in a word, all manner of Mechanists, from the Cartwright up to the Code-maker;[9] and by the nearly total silence of all Preachers and Teachers who should give a voice to Poetry, Religion, and Morality, we might fancy either that man's Dynamical nature was, to all spiritual intents, extinct—or else so perfected, that nothing more was to be made of it by the old means; and henceforth only in his Mechanical contrivances did any hope exist for him.

To define the limits of these two departments of man's activity, which work into one another, and by means of one another, so intricately and inseparably, were by its nature an impossible attempt. Their relative importance, even to the wisest mind, will vary in different times, according to the special wants and dispositions of these times. Meanwhile, it seems clear enough that only in the right co-ordination of the two, and the vigorous forwarding of *both*, does our true line of action lie. Undue cultivation of the inward or Dynamical province leads to idle, visionary, impracticable courses, and especially in rude eras, to Superstition and Fanaticism, with their long train of baleful and well-known evils. Undue cultivation of the outward, again, though less immediately prejudicial, and even for the time productive of many palpable benefits, must, in the long run, by destroying Moral Force, which is the parent of all other Force, prove not less certainly, and perhaps still more hopelessly, pernicious. This, we take it, is the grand characteristic of our age. By our skill in Mechanism, it has come to pass that, in the management of external things, we excel all other ages; while in whatever

respects the pure moral nature, in true dignity of soul and character, we are perhaps inferior to most civilized ages.

In fact, if we look deeper, we shall find that this faith in Mechanism has now struck its roots deep into men's most intimate, primary sources of conviction; and is thence sending up, over his whole life and activity, innumerable stems—fruit-bearing and poison-bearing. The truth is, men have lost their belief in the Invisible, and believe, and hope, and work only in the Visible; or, to speak it in other words, This is not a Religious age. Only the material, the immediately practical, not the divine and spiritual, is important to us. The infinite, absolute character of Virtue has passed into a finite, conditional one; it is no longer a worship of the Beautiful and Good; but a calculation of the Profitable. Worship, indeed, in any sense, is not recognised among us, or is mechanically explained into Fear of pain, or Hope of pleasure.[1] Our true Deity is Mechanism. It has subdued external Nature for us, and, we think, it will do all other things. We are Giants in physical power: in a deeper than a metaphorical sense, we are Titans, that strive, by heaping mountain on mountain, to conquer Heaven also.

The strong mechanical character, so visible in the spiritual pursuits and methods of this age, may be traced much farther into the condition and prevailing disposition of our spiritual nature itself. Consider, for example, the general fashion of Intellect in this era. Intellect, the power man has of knowing and believing, is now nearly synonymous with Logic, or the mere power of arranging and communicating. Its implement is not Meditation, but Argument. 'Cause and effect' is almost the only category under which we look at, and work with, all Nature. Our first question with regard to any object is not, What is it? but, How is it? We are no longer instinctively driven to apprehend, and lay to heart, what is Good and Lovely, but rather to enquire, as onlookers, how it is produced, whence it comes, whither it goes? Our favourite Philosophers have no love and no hatred; they stand among us not to do, or to create any thing, but as a sort of Logic-mills to grind out the true causes and effects of all that is done and created. To the eye of a Smith, a

Hume, or a Constant, all is well that works quietly.[2] An Order of Ignatius Loyola, a Presbyterianism of John Knox, a Wickliffe, or a Henry the Eighth,[3] are simply so many mechanical phenomena, caused or causing.

The *Euphuist*[4] of our day differs much from his pleasant predecessors. An intellectual dapperling of these times boasts chiefly of his irresistible perspicacity, his 'dwelling in the daylight of truth,' and so forth; which, on examination, turns out to be a dwelling in the *rush*-light of 'closet-logic,' and a deep unconsciousness that there is any other light to dwell in; or any other objects to survey with it. Wonder, indeed, is, on all hands, dying out: it is the sign of uncultivation to wonder. Speak to any small man of a high, majestic Reformation, of a high, majestic Luther[5] to lead it, and forthwith he sets about 'accounting' for it! how the 'circumstances of the time' called for such a character, and found him, we suppose, standing girt and road-ready, to do its errand; how the 'circumstances of the time' created, fashioned, floated him quietly along into the result; how, in short, this small man, had he been there, could have performed the like himself! For it is the 'force of circumstances' that does every thing; the force of one man can do nothing. Now all this is grounded on little more than a metaphor. We figure Society as a 'Machine,' and that mind is opposed to mind, as body is to body; whereby two, or at most ten, little minds must be stronger than one great mind. Notable absurdity! For the plain truth, very plain, we think, is, that minds are opposed to minds in quite a different way; and *one* man that has a higher Wisdom, a hitherto unknown spiritual Truth in him, is stronger, not than ten men that have it not, or than ten thousand, but than *all* men, that have it not; and stands among them with a quite ethereal, angelic power, as with a sword out of Heaven's own armoury, sky-tempered, which no buckler, and no tower of brass, will finally withstand.

But to us, in these times, such considerations rarely occur. We enjoy, we see nothing by direct vision; but only by reflexion, and in anatomical dismemberment. Like Sir Hudibras,[6] for every Why we must have a Wherefore. We have our little *theory* on all human and

divine things. Poetry, the workings of genius itself, which in all times, with one or another meaning, has been called Inspiration, and held to be mysterious and inscrutable, is no longer without its scientific exposition. The building of the lofty rhyme is like any other masonry or brick-laying: we have theories of its rise, height, decline, and fall —which latter, it would seem, is now near, among all people. Of our 'Theories of Taste,' as they are called, wherein the deep, infinite, unspeakable Love of Wisdom and Beauty, which dwells in all men, is 'explained,' made mechanically visible, from 'Association,' and the like, why should we say any thing? Hume has written us a 'Natural History of Religion;'[7] in which one Natural History, all the rest are included. Strangely, too, does the general feeling coincide with Hume's in this wonderful problem; for whether his 'Natural History' be the right one or not, that Religion must have a Natural History, all of us, cleric and laic, seem to be agreed. He indeed regards it as a Disease, we again as Health; so far there is a difference; but in our first principle we are at one.

To what extent theological Unbelief, we mean intellectual dissent from the Church, in its view of Holy Writ, prevails at this day, would be a highly important, were it not, under any circumstances, an almost impossible enquiry. But the Unbelief, which is of a still more fundamental character, every man may see prevailing, with scarcely any but the faintest contradiction, all around him; even in the Pulpit itself. Religion, in most countries, more or less in every country, is no longer what it was, and should be—a thousand-voiced psalm from the heart of Man to his invisible Father, the fountain of all Goodness, Beauty, Truth, and revealed in every revelation of these; but for the most part, a wise prudential feeling grounded on mere calculation; a matter, as all others now are, of Expediency and Utility; whereby some smaller quantum of earthly enjoyment may be exchanged for a far larger quantum of celestial enjoyment. Thus Religion, too, is Profit; a working for wages; not Reverence, but vulgar Hope or Fear. Many, we know, very many, we hope, are still religious in a far different sense; were it not so, our case were too desperate: But to witness that such is the temper of the times, we take any calm

observant man, who agrees or disagrees in our feeling on the matter, and ask him whether our *view* of it is not in general well-founded.

Literature, too, if we consider it, gives similar testimony. At no former era has Literature, the printed communication of Thought, been of such importance as it is now. We often hear that the Church is in danger; and truly so it is—in a danger it seems not to know of: For, with its tithes in the most perfect safety,[8] its functions are becoming more and more superseded. The true Church of England, at this moment, lies in the Editors of its Newspapers. These preach to the people daily, weekly; admonishing kings themselves; advising peace or war, with an authority which only the first Reformers, and a long-past class of Popes,[9] were possessed of; inflicting moral censure; imparting moral encouragement, consolation, edification; in all ways, diligently 'administering the Discipline of the Church.' It may be said, too, that in private disposition, the new Preachers somewhat resemble the Mendicant Friars[1] of old times: outwardly full of holy zeal; inwardly not without stratagem, and hunger for terrestrial things. But omitting this class, and the boundless host of watery personages who pipe, as they are able, on so many scrannel[2] straws, let us look at the higher regions of Literature, where, if anywhere, the pure melodies of Poesy and Wisdom should be heard. Of natural talent there is no deficiency: one or two richly-endowed individuals even give us a superiority in this respect. But what is the song they sing? Is it a tone of the Memnon Statue,[3] breathing music as the *light* first touches it? a 'liquid wisdom,' disclosing to our sense the deep, infinite harmonies of Nature and man's soul? Alas, no! It is not a matin or vesper hymn to the Spirit of all Beauty, but a fierce clashing of cymbals, and shouting of multitudes, as children pass through the fire to Molech![4] Poetry itself has no stant the huzzaing languishes, he too stops short. In fact, what morality we have takes the shape of Ambition, of Honour; beyond money and money's worth, our only rational blessedness is Popularity. It were but a fool's trick to die for conscience. Only for 'character,' by duel, or, in case of extremity, by suicide, is the wise man bound to die. By arguing on

the ‘force of circumstances,’ we have argued away all force from ourselves; and stand leashed together, uniform in dress and movement, like the rowers of some boundless galley. This and that may be right and true; *but* we must not do it. Wonderful ‘Force of Public Opinion!’ We must act and walk in all points as it prescribes; follow the traffic it bids us, realize the sum of money, the degree of ‘influence’ it expects of us, *or* we shall be lightly esteemed; certain mouthfuls of articulate wind will be blown at us, and this what mortal courage can front? Thus, while civil Liberty is more and more secured to us, our moral Liberty is all but lost. Practically considered, our creed is Fatalism; and, free in hand and foot, we are shackled in heart and soul, with far straiter than feudal chains. Truly may we say, with the Philosopher, ‘the deep meaning of the Laws of Mechanism lies heavy on us;’ and in the closet, in the market-place, in the temple, by the social hearth, encumbers the whole movements of our mind, and over our noblest faculties is spreading a nightmare sleep.

1829

Endnotes

- Note 1: Birmingham is an industrial center approximately one hundred miles north of London; “Fire-king”: Carlyle’s name for the new steam-powered ships.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Luis Vaz de Camoens (ca. 1524–1580) was a Portuguese writer whose most famous work, *Os Lusadas* (1572), describes explorer and colonizer Vasco de Gama’s trip to India by way of Cape Verde.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Vasco de Gama (ca. 1460–1524), the explorer described in Camoens’s epic.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The railway.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: An early form of hypnosis that used magnets to place patients in a sleeplike trance.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Refers to the educational system devised by Joseph Lancaster (1778–1838) to reduce the need for teachers by

placing students of varying abilities supervised by monitors in the same classroom.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: James Hamilton (1769–1829) devised a system of teaching language that reduced the need for instructors by allowing students to compare translations directly with original texts.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Associations that translated and distributed the Old and New Testament.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Center of the cotton industry.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Unitarians adhered to a form of Christianity that rejects the doctrine of the Trinity; Utilitarians believed that the best action is that which benefits the greatest number; Anabaptists were adherents of "credobaptism," or baptism only after a profession of faith. Phrenologists espoused a theory of the brain as composed of multiple faculties and believed that the skull was shaped by the brain.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The popular breeze.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Sir Isaac Newton (1643–1727) was popularly believed to have developed his theory of gravity spontaneously as a result of having an apple fall on this head.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The earliest electric batteries.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Raphael (1483–1520) and Angelo (or Michelangelo, 1475–1564) were Italian artists of the Renaissance. Mozart (1756–1791) was an Austrian composer.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The Royal Academy was founded in England in 1768 to train artists in the Classical style.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A London street that served as the center of publishing and bookselling.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Swedish queen (1626–1689) renowned for her commitment to learning and her intellectual relationship with philosopher Rene Descartes (1596–1650).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: King Fredrick of Prussia (1712–1786) maintained a long-standing relationship with the author and philosopher known as Voltaire (1694–1778).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Libraries. "Glypcothéques": museum containing a collection of statues.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Roman Catholic association that sought to help souls escape from purgatory to heaven through prayer and other acts.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A series of wars between Muslims and Christians that sought to secure control of sites considered sacred by both groups.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A venue for a diverse array of meetings including the Political Economy Club and the Foreign and British Anti-slavery Society.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The 1688 revolution that replaced James II with William III and Mary II; the revolution rejected the divine right of kings and instituted limits on monarchical power.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The French Revolution (1789–99) dissolved the government, abolished feudalism, and drafted the Declaration of Man and Citizen.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Act that limited the conditions under which subjects could be imprisoned by providing a legal remedy for unjust or arbitrary imprisonment.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Carlyle is referencing contemporary debates about the extension of the franchise beyond large property owners.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Knowledge derived from deductive reasoning, as opposed to from experience or observed facts.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Because they lived under the dictatorship of the Roman Empire, for Carlyle, Saint Paul and the Apostles lived under political slavery.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Christopher Columbus (1451–1506) and Bartolomé de las Casas (1484–1566) both traveled to the Americas as representatives of Spain in the 15th century.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Hernán Cortés (1485–1547), Francisco Pizarro (1478–1541), Fernando Álvarez de Toledo y Pimentil, the Third Duke of Alba (1507–1582), and Xiemenes, or Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros (1436–1517) all advanced and protected Spain’s

colonial interests in the 15th and 16th centuries.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: The Inquisition (1478–1834) sought to reform the Catholic church in Spain largely through the forced conversion, exile, torture, and sometimes massacre of non-Christians. Philip II (1527–1598) was king of Spain from 1556 until his death.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The Siege of Leydon was a Spanish siege of the Dutch city of Leydon in 1574. William the Silent: another name for William of Orange (1533–1584). Egmont: the Second Earl of Egmont (1711–1770), a pamphleteer, close confidant of George III (1738–1820). Dewitt: Johan Dewitt (1625–1672), a political figure of 17th-century Holland who helped draft the Treaty of Westminster.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The highest official of the lower house of Parliament.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Robert Stewart, Lord Castlereagh (1769–1822), was an Anglo-Irish statesman and politician. Sir William Cecil, Lord Burghley (1520–1598), was one of Queen Elizabeth's most trusted advisors.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: William Shakespeare (1564–1616) and Philip Sidney (1554–1586) were the most important playrights and poets of their time. Sheridan Knowles (1784–1862) was a second-rate actor. Beau Brummel (1778–1840) was a leader of fashion.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Edmund Cartwright (1743–1823) invented the power loom. "Code-maker" is probably a reference to the invention of Charles Babbage's (1791–1871) mechanical computer, the Difference Engine.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Utilitarian Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) wrote that "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*. It is for them along to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Adam Smith (1723–1790) and David Hume (1711–1776) were philosophers, political theorists, and key figures of

the Scottish Enlightenment. Benjamin Constant (1767–1830) was a Swiss-French political theorist.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) was a Spanish Catholic priest who founded the Society of Jesus, or the order of the Jesuits, who were important to the Counter-Reformation. John Knox (1514–1572) was a Scottish theologian. John Wickliffe (1331–1384) was a Catholic priest, theologian, and scholastic philosopher who is considered an important precursor to the Reformation. Henry VIII (1491–1547), king of England from 1509 to 1547, spearheaded the English Reformation in order to annul his marriage to his first wife, Catherine of Aragon.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A name for a writer in the style of John Lyly (~1553–1606) characterized by alliteration, antithesis, and balance.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Martin Luther (1483–1546) was a German Catholic priest who inaugurated the Reformation and Protestantism by nailing his criticisms of the Catholic Church, now known as the 95 Theses, to the door of a church in 1517.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Refers to a mock-heroic narrative poem by Samuel Butler (1613–1680). The poem lavishes absurd praise on Hudibras, an arrogant but unintelligent knight-errant, and satirizes different factions of the English Civil War from a Royalist perspective.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Hume published *Natural History of Religion* in 1757; he argues that religion and theology cannot be derived from the observation of natural phenomena.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Carlyle suggests that the Church is endangered by the expanding roles of other institutions in public life.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Carlyle again refers to the Reformation, arguing that papal authority, and thus necessarily that of early church reformers who challenged it, held much greater sway in public and social life than it did in his moment.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: “Mendicant” refers to specific Christian orders in which adherents take vows of poverty and travel from place to place to evangelize.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Skinny, thin.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A statue in Egypt that vibrated and emitted sound as the sun rose as a result of damage from an earthquake in 27 B.C.E.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Or Moloch, generally understood as a pagan deity associated with the underworld.Return to reference 4

From Past and Present[1]

Endnotes

- Note 1: In 1843 there were reputedly one and a half million unemployed in England (out of a population of eighteen million). The closing of factories and the reduction of wages led to severe rioting in the manufacturing districts. Bread-hungry protesters (as well as the Chartist demonstrators who demanded political reforms) caused many observers to dread that a large-scale revolution was imminent. Carlyle was so appalled by the plight of the industrial workers that he postponed his research into the life and times of Cromwell to air his views on the contemporary crisis. *Past and Present,* a book written in seven weeks, was a call for heroic leadership. Cromwell and other historic leaders are cited, but the principal example from the past is Abbot Samson, a medieval monk who established order in the monasteries under his charge. Carlyle hoped that the "Captains of Industry" might provide a comparable leadership in 1843. He was aware that the spread of democracy was inevitable, but he had little confidence in it as a method of producing leaders. Nor did he have any confidence, at this time, in the landed aristocracy, who seemed to him preoccupied with foxhunting, preserving their game, and upholding the tariffs on grain (Corn Laws). In place of a "Do-nothing Aristocracy" there was need for a "Working Aristocracy." This first selection is from book 3, chap. 13.Return to reference 1

From *Democracy*

If the Serene Highnesses and Majesties do not take note of that,[2] then, as I perceive, *that* will take note of itself! The time for levity, insincerity, and idle babble and play-acting, in all kinds, is gone by; it is a serious, grave time. Old long-vexed questions, not yet solved in logical words or parliamentary laws, are fast solving themselves in facts, somewhat unblessed to behold! This largest of questions, this question of Work and Wages, which ought, had we heeded Heaven's voice, to have begun two generations ago or more, cannot be delayed longer without hearing Earth's voice. "Labour" will verily need to be somewhat "organized," as they say,—God knows with what difficulty. Man will actually need to have his debts and earnings a little better paid by man; which, let Parliaments speak of them, or be silent of them, are eternally his due from man, and cannot, without penalty and at length not without death-penalty,[3] be withheld. How much ought to cease among us straightway; how much ought to begin straightway, while the hours yet are!

Truly they are strange results to which this of leaving all to "Cash"; of quietly shutting up the God's Temple, and gradually opening wide-open the Mammon's Temple, with "Laissez-faire, and Every man for himself,"[4]—have led us in these days! We have Upper, speaking Classes, who indeed do "speak" as never man spake before;[5] the withered flimsiness, godless baseness and barrenness of whose Speech might of itself indicate what kind of Doing and practical Governing went on under it! For Speech is the gaseous element out of which most kinds of Practice and Performance, especially all kinds of moral Performance, condense themselves, and take shape; as the one is, so will the other be. Descending, accordingly, into the Dumb Class in its Stockport Cellars and Poor-Law Bastilles,[6] have we not to announce that they are hitherto unexampled in the History of Adam's Posterity?

Life was never a May-game for men: in all times the lot of the dumb millions born to toil was defaced with manifold sufferings,

injustices, heavy burdens, avoidable and unavoidable; not play at all, but hard work that made the sinews sore and the heart sore. As bond-slaves, *villani, bordarii, sochemanni,*[7] nay indeed as dukes, earls and kings, men were oftentimes made weary of their life; and had to say, in the sweat of their brow[8] and of their soul, Behold, it is not sport, it is grim earnest, and our back can bear no more! Who knows not what massacrings and harryings there have been; grinding, long-continuing, unbearable injustices,—till the heart had to rise in madness, and some "*Eu Sachsen, nimith euer sachses,* You Saxons, out with your gully-knives, then!" You Saxons, some "arrestment," partial "arrestment of the Knaves and Dastards" has become indispensable!—The page of Dryasdust[9] is heavy with such details.

And yet I well venture to believe that in no time, since the beginnings of Society, was the lot of those same dumb millions of toilers so entirely unbearable as it is even in the days now passing over us. It is not to die, or even to die of hunger, that makes a man wretched; many men have died; all men must die,—the last exit of us all is in a Fire-Chariot of Pain.[1] But it is to live miserable we know not why; to work sore and yet gain nothing; to be heartworn, weary, yet isolated, unrelated, girt-in with a cold universal Laissez-faire: it is to die slowly all our life long, imprisoned in a deaf, dead, Infinite Injustice, as in the accursed iron belly of a Phalaris' Bull![2] This is and remains for ever intolerable to all men whom God has made. Do we wonder at French Revolutions, Chartisms, Revolts of Three Days?[3] The times, if we will consider them, are really unexampled.

Never before did I hear of an Irish Widow reduced to "prove her sisterhood by dying of typhus-fever and infecting seventeen persons,"—saying in such undeniable way, "You *see,* I was your sister!"[4] Sisterhood, brotherhood, was often forgotten; but not till the rise of these ultimate Mammon and Shotbelt Gospels[5] did I ever see it so expressly denied. If no pious Lord or *Law-ward* would remember it, always some pious Lady *("Hlaf-dig,"* Benefactress, *"Loaf-giveress,"* they say she is,—blessings on her beautiful heart!)

was there, with mild mother-voice and hand, to remember it; some pious thoughtful *Elder,* what we now call "Prester," *Presbyter* or "Priest," was there to put all men in mind of it, in the name of the God who had made all.

Not even in Black Dahomey[6] was it ever, I think, forgotten to the typhus-fever length. Mungo Park,[7] resourceless, had sunk down to die under the Negro Village-Tree, a horrible White object in the eyes of all. But in the poor Black Woman, and her daughter who stood aghast at him, whose earthly wealth and funded capital consisted of one small calabash of rice, there lived a heart richer than *"Laissez-faire":* they, with a royal munificence, boiled their rice for him; they sang all night to him, spinning assiduous on their cotton distaffs, as he lay to sleep: "Let us pity the poor white man; no mother has he to fetch him milk, no sister to grind him corn!" Thou poor black Noble One,—thou *Lady* too: did not a God make thee too; was there not in thee too something of a God!—

Gurth,[8] born thrall of Cedric the Saxon, has been greatly pitied by Dryasdust and others. Gurth, with the brass collar round his neck, tending Cedric's pigs in the glades of the wood, is not what I call an exemplar of human felicity: but Gurth, with the sky above him, with the free air and tinted boscage and umbrage round him, and in him at least the certainty of supper and social lodging when he came home; Gurth to me seems happy, in comparison with many a Lancashire and Buckinghamshire man, of these days, not born thrall of anybody! Gurth's brass collar did not gall him: Cedric *deserved* to be his Master. The pigs were Cedric's, but Gurth too would get his parings of them. Gurth had the inexpressible satisfaction of feeling himself related indissolubly, though in a rude brass-collar way, to his fellow-mortals in this Earth. He had superiors, inferiors, equals.—Gurth is now "emancipated" long since; has what we call "Liberty." Liberty, I am told, is a Divine thing. Liberty when it becomes the "Liberty to die by starvation" is not so divine!

Liberty? The true liberty of a man, you would say, consisted in his finding out, or being forced to find out, the right path, and to walk thereon. To learn, or to be taught, what work he actually was able

for; and then by permission, persuasion, and even compulsion, to set about doing of the same! That is his true blessedness, honour, "liberty" and maximum of wellbeing: if liberty be not that, I for one have small care about liberty. You do not allow a palpable madman to leap over precipices; you violate his liberty, you that are wise; and keep him, were it in strait-waistcoats, away from the precipices! Every stupid, every cowardly and foolish man is but a less palpable madman: his true liberty were that a wiser man, that any and every wiser man, could, by brass collars, or in whatever milder or sharper way, lay hold of him when he was going wrong, and order and compel him to go a little righter. O, if thou really art my *Senior*, Seigneur, my *Elder,* Presbyter or Priest,—if thou art in very deed my *Wiser*, may a beneficent instinct lead and impel thee to "conquer" me, to command me! If thou do know better than I what is good and right, I conjure[9] thee in the name of God, force me to do it; were it by never such brass collars, whips and handcuffs, leave me not to walk over precipices! That I have been called, by all the Newspapers, a "free man" will avail me little, if my pilgrimage have ended in death and wreck. O that the Newspapers had called me slave, coward, fool, or what it pleased their sweet voices to name me, and I had attained not death, but life!—Liberty requires new definitions.

A conscious abhorrence and intolerance of Folly, of Baseness, Stupidity, Poltroonery and all that brood of things, dwells deep in some men: still deeper in others an *un*conscious abhorrence and intolerance, clothed moreover by the beneficent Supreme Powers in what stout appetites, energies, egoisms so-called, are suitable to it; —these latter are your Conquerors, Romans, Normans, Russians, Indo-English; Founders of what we call Aristocracies. Which indeed have they not the most "divine right" to found;—being themselves very truly *Aristoi*, BRAVEST, BEST; and conquering generally a confused rabble of WORST, or at lowest, clearly enough, of WORSE? I think their divine right, tried, with affirmatory verdict, in the greatest Law-Court known to me, was good! A class of men who are dreadfully

exclaimed against by Dryasdust; of whom nevertheless beneficent Nature has oftentimes had need; and may, alas, again have need.

When, across the hundredfold poor scepticisms, trivialisms, and constitutional cobwebberies of Dryasdust, you catch any glimpse of a William the Conqueror, a Tancred of Hauteville[1] or such like,—do you not discern veritably some rude outline of a true God-made King; whom not the Champion of England[2] cased in tin, but all Nature and the Universe were calling to the throne? It is absolutely necessary that he get thither. Nature does not mean her poor Saxon children to perish, of obesity, stupor or other malady, as yet: a stern Ruler and Line of Rulers therefore is called in,—a stern but most beneficent *perpetual House-Surgeon* is by Nature herself called in, and even the appropriate *fees* are provided for him! Dryasdust talks lamentably about Hereward and the Fen Counties; fate of earl Waltheof;[3] Yorkshire and the North reduced to ashes; all of which is undoubtedly lamentable. But even Dryasdust apprises me of one fact: "A child, in this William's reign, might have carried a purse of gold from end to end of England." My erudite friend, it is a fact which outweighs a thousand! Sweep away thy constitutional, sentimental, and other cobwebberies; look eye to eye, if thou still have any eye, in the face of this big burly William Bastard: thou wilt see a fellow of most flashing discernment, of most strong lion-heart; —in whom, as it were, within a frame of oak and iron, the gods have planted the soul of "a man of genius"! Dost thou call that nothing? I call it an immense thing!—Rage enough was in this Willelmus Conquaestor, rage enough for his occasions;—and yet the essential element of him, as of all such men, is not scorching *fire*, but shining illuminative *light.* Fire and light are strangely interchangeable; nay, at bottom, I have found them different forms of the same most godlike "elementary substance" in our world: a thing worth stating in these days. The essential element of this Conquaestor is, first of all, the most sun-eyed perception of what *is* really what on this God's-Earth;—which, thou wilt find, does mean at bottom "Justice," and "Virtues" not a few: *Conformity* to what the Maker has seen good to make; that, I suppose, will mean Justice and a Virtue or two?—

Dost thou think Willelmus Conquaestor would have tolerated ten years' jargon, one hour's jargon, on the propriety of killing Cotton-manufactures by partridge Corn-Laws?[4] I fancy, this was not the man to knock out of his night's rest with nothing but a noisy bedlamism in your mouth![5] "Assist us still better to bush the partridges; strangle Plugson who spins the shirts?"— *"Par la Splendeur de Dieu!"*[6]—Dostthink Willelmus Conquaestor, in this new time, with Steam-engine Captains of Industry on one hand of him, and Joe-Manton Captains of Idleness[7] on the other, would have doubted which *was* really the BEST; which did deserve strangling, and which not?

I have a certain indestructible regard for Willelmus Conquaestor. A resident House-Surgeon, provided by Nature for her beloved English People, and even furnished with the requisite fees, as I said; for he by no means felt himself doing Nature's work, this Willelmus, but his own work exclusively! And his own work withal it was; informed *"par la Splendeur de Dieu."*—I say, it is necessary to get the work out of such a man, however harsh that be! When a world, not yet doomed for death, is rushing down to ever-deeper Baseness and Confusion, it is a dire necessity of Nature's to bring in her ARISTOCRACIES, her BEST, even by forcible methods. When their descendants or representatives cease entirely to *be* the Best, Nature's poor world will very soon rush down again to Baseness; and it becomes a dire necessity of Nature's to cast them out. Hence French Revolutions, Five-point Charters,[8] Democracies, and a mournful list of *Etceteras*, in these our afflicted times.

***

Democracy, the chase of Liberty in that direction, shall go its full course; unrestrained by him of Pferdefuss-Quacksalber,[9] or any of *his* household. The Toiling Millions of Mankind, in most vital need and passionate instinctive desire of Guidance, shall cast away False-Guidance; and hope, for an hour, that No-Guidance will suffice them: but it can be for an hour only. The smallest item of human Slavery is

the oppression of man by his Mock-Superiors; the palpablest, but I say at bottom the smallest. Let him shake off such oppression, trample it indignantly under his feet; I blame him not, I pity and commend him. But oppression by your Mock-Superiors well shaken off, the grand problem yet remains to solve: That of finding government by your Real-Superiors! Alas, how shall we ever learn the solution of that, benighted, bewildered, sniffing, sneering, godforgetting unfortunates as we are? It is a work for centuries; to be taught us by tribulations, confusions, insurrections, obstructions; who knows if not by conflagration and despair! It is a lesson inclusive of all other lessons; the hardest of all lessons to learn.

Endnotes

- Note 2: The previous chapter, "Reward," had urged that English manufacturers needed the help of everyone and that Parliament should remove the tariffs (Corn Laws) restricting the growth of trade and industry.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, by the outbreak of a revolution, as in France.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The pursuit of wealth (Mammon is the devil of covetousness) under a noninterventionist economic policy. *Laissez-faire* literally means "let it be" (French).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: John 7:46.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, workhouses for the unemployed. "Stockport Cellars": in a cellar in the slum district of Stockport, an industrial town near Manchester, three children were poisoned by their starving parents, who wanted to collect insurance benefits from a burial society.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Three categories of feudal tenants, from lowest in status to highest (Latin).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Genesis 3:19.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: An imaginary author of dull histories.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: 2 Kings 2:11.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Phalaris was a Sicilian tyrant (6th century B.C.E.) whose victims were roasted alive by being confined inside the brass figure of a bull under which a fire was lit.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The 1830 revolution in France (July 27–29).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: An incident referred to several times in *Past and Present.* Dickens in *Bleak House* (1851) also showed how indifference to the lack of sanitation in London slums led to the spread of disease to other parts of the city.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The attitudes of landowning aristocracy who were committed to preserving their exclusive right to shoot wild game.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A state in west Africa where human sacrifice and cannibalism persisted.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Explorer and author (1771–1806); he was killed by Africans.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A swineherd described in Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Solemnly charge.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Norman hero of the First Crusade (1095–99). King William I of England (ca. 1028–1087; reigned 1066–87), surnamed *the Conqueror* after the Battle of Hastings in 1066. Being an illegitimate son, he also bore the surname of William the Bastard. Although some historians condemn William as a ruthless ruler, he is ranked by Carlyle as a hero because of his strong and efficient government. William fulfilled the requirements of the kingly hero described by Carlyle in his lectures *On Heroes:* a man fittest "to *command* over us . . . to tell us what we are to *do.*"Return to reference 1
- Note 2: An official who goes through a formality, at coronation ceremonies, of demanding whether anyone challenges the right of the monarch to ascend the throne. He wears full armor ("cased in tin") and is a symbol of outworn feudal customs.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: His execution in 1075, on a supposedly trumped-up charge, is cited as a blot on William's record as king. Hereward the Wake was an outlaw whose exploits against William the Conqueror made him seem a romantic figure like Robin Hood.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: See p. 97, notes 1–2.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, not the man to disturb with your mad ravings. Bedlam, the hospital of St. Mary in Bethlehem, was London's most famous lunatic asylum.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: By the splendor of God! (French): one of William's oaths. Plugson of Undershot was Carlyle's fictive representative of the new class of industrial leaders. This imaginary speech ("Assist us . . .") sums up the pleas of the High Tariff lobby in Parliament. "Keep the Corn Laws intact so that the aristocratic landlords may continue to enjoy shooting partridges on their estates; subdue the manufacturing leaders by preventing trade."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The idle aristocracy who wasted time shooting partridges with guns made by Joseph Manton, a London gunsmith.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The Chartist movement for political reform called first for six, then for five major changes to the existing system of parliamentary democracy.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Horse foot quack doctor (a fake German name invented by Carlyle).Return to reference 9

Captains of Industry[1]

If I believed that Mammonism with its adjuncts was to continue henceforth the one serious principle of our existence, I should reckon it idle to solicit remedial measures from any Government, the disease being insusceptible of remedy. Government can do much, but it can in no wise do all. Government, as the most conspicuous object in Society, is called upon to give signal of what shall be done; and, in many ways, to preside over further, and command the doing of it. But the Government cannot do, by all its signalling and commanding, what the Society is radically indisposed to do. In the long-run every Government is the exact symbol of its People, with their wisdom and unwisdom; we have to say, Like People like Government.—The main substance of this immense Problem of Organizing Labour, and first of all of Managing the Working Classes, will, it is very clear, have to be solved by those who stand practically in the middle of it; by those who themselves work and preside over work. Of all that can be enacted by any Parliament in regard to it, the germs must already lie potentially extant in those two Classes, who are to obey such enactment. A Human Chaos *in* which there is no light, you vainly attempt to irradiate by light shed *on* it: order never can arise there.

But it is my firm conviction that the "Hell of England" will *cease* to be that of "not making money"; that we shall get a nobler Hell and a nobler Heaven! I anticipate light *in* the Human Chaos, glimmering, shining more and more; under manifold true signals from without That light shall shine. Our deity no longer being Mammon,—O Heavens, each man will then say to himself: "Why such deadly haste to make money? I shall not go to Hell, even if I do not make money! There is another Hell, I am told!" Competition, at railway-speed, in all branches of commerce and work will then abate:—good felt-hats for the head, in every sense, instead of seven-feet lath-and-plaster hats on wheels,[2] will then be discoverable! Bubble-periods,[3] with their panics and commercial crises, will again become infrequent; steady modest industry will

take the place of gambling speculation. To be a noble Master, among noble Workers, will again be the first ambition with some few; to be a rich Master only the second. How the Inventive Genius of England, with the whirr of its bobbins and billy-rollers[4] shoved somewhat into the backgrounds of the brain, will contrive and devise, not cheaper produce exclusively, but fairer distribution of the produce at its present cheapness! By degrees, we shall again have a Society with something of Heroism in it, something of Heaven's Blessing on it; we shall again have, as my German friend[5] asserts, "instead of Mammon-Feudalism with unsold cotton-shirts and Preservation of the Game, noble just Industrialism and Government by the Wisest!"

It is with the hope of awakening here and there a British man to know himself for a man and divine soul, that a few words of parting admonition, to all persons to whom the Heavenly Powers have lent power of any kind in this land, may now be addressed. And first to those same Master-Workers, Leaders of Industry; who stand nearest, and in fact powerfullest, though not most prominent, being as yet in too many senses a Virtuality rather than an Actuality.

The Leaders of Industry, if Industry is ever to be led, are virtually the Captains of the World; if there be no nobleness in them, there will never be an Aristocracy more. But let the Captains of Industry consider: once again, are they born of other clay than the old Captains of Slaughter; doomed for ever to be not Chivalry, but a mere gold-plated *Doggery;*—what the French well name *Canaille,* "Doggery" with more or less gold carrion at its disposal? Captains of Industry are the true Fighters, henceforth recognizable as the only true ones: Fighters against Chaos, Necessity and the Devils and Jötuns;[6] and lead on Mankind in that great, and alone true, and universal warfare; the stars in their courses fighting for them, and all Heaven and all Earth saying audibly, Well done! Let the Captains of Industry retire into their own hearts, and ask solemnly, If there is nothing but vulturous hunger for fine wines, valet reputation and gilt carriages, discoverable there? Of hearts made by the Almighty God I will not believe such a thing. Deep-hidden under wretchedest god-

forgetting Cants, Epicurisms, Dead-Sea Apisms;[7] forgotten as under foullest fat Lethe[8] mud and weeds, there is yet, in all hearts born into this God's-World, a spark of the Godlike slumbering. Awake, O nightmare sleepers; awake, arise, or be for ever fallen![9] This is not playhouse poetry; it is sober fact. Our England, our world cannot live as it is. It will connect itself with a God again, or go down with nameless throes and fire-consummation to the Devils. Thou who feelest aught of such a Godlike stirring in thee, any faintest intimation of it as through heavy-laden dreams, follow *it,* I conjure thee. Arise, save thyself, be one of those that save thy country.

Bucaniers,[1] Chactaw Indians, whose supreme aim in fighting is that they may get the scalps, the money, that they may amass scalps and money; out of such came no Chivalry, and never will! Out of such came only gore and wreck, infernal rage and misery; desperation quenched in annihilation. Behold it, I bid thee, behold there, and consider! What is it that thou have a hundred thousand-pound bills laid up in thy strong-room, a hundred scalps hung up in thy wigwam? I value not them or thee. Thy scalps and thy thousand-pound bills are as yet nothing, if no nobleness from within irradiate them; if no Chivalry, in action, or in embryo ever struggling towards birth and action, be there.

Love of men cannot be bought by cash-payment; and without love, men cannot endure to be together. You cannot lead a Fighting World without having it regimented, chivalried: the thing, in a day, becomes impossible; all men in it, the highest at first, the very lowest at last, discern consciously, or by a noble instinct, this necessity. And can you any more continue to lead a Working World unregimented, anarchic? I answer, and the Heavens and Earth are now answering, No! The thing becomes not "in a day" impossible; but in some two generations it does. Yes, when fathers and mothers, in Stockport hunger-cellars, begin to eat their children, and Irish widows have to prove their relationship by dying of typhus-fever; and amid Governing "Corporations of the Best and Bravest," busy to preserve their game by "bushing," dark millions of God's human creatures start up in mad Chartisms, impracticable Sacred-Months,

and Manchester Insurrections;[2]—and there is a virtual Industrial Aristocracy as yet only half-alive, spell-bound amid money-bags and ledgers; and an actual Idle Aristocracy seemingly near dead in somnolent delusions, in trespasses and double-barrels,[3] "sliding," as on inclined-planes, which every new year they *soap* with new Hansard's-jargon under God's sky, and so are "sliding" ever faster, towards a "scale"[4] and balance-scale whereon is written *Thou art found Wanting;*[5]—in such days, after a generation or two, I say, it does become, even to the low and simple, very palpably impossible! No Working World, any more than a Fighting World, can be led on without a noble Chivalry of Work, and laws and fixed rules which follow out of that,—far nobler than any Chivalry of Fighting was. As an anarchic multitude on mere Supply-and-demand, it is becoming inevitable that we dwindle in horrid suicidal convulsion, and self-abrasion, frightful to the imagination, into *Chactaw* Workers. With wigwams and scalps,—with palaces and thousand-pound bills; with savagery, depopulation, chaotic desolation! Good Heavens, will not one French Revolution and Reign of Terror suffice us, but must there be two? There will be two if needed; there will be twenty if needed; there will be precisely as many as needed. The Laws of Nature will have themselves fulfilled. That is a thing certain to me.

Your gallant battle-hosts and work-hosts, as the others did, will need to be made loyally yours; they must and will be regulated, methodically secured in their just share of conquest under you;—joined with you in veritable brotherhood, sonhood, by quite other and deeper ties than those of temporary day's wages! How would mere redcoated regiments, to say nothing of chivalries, fight for you, if you could discharge them on the evening of the battle, on payment of the stipulated shillings,—and they discharge you on the morning of it! Chelsea Hospitals,[6] pensions, promotions, rigorous lasting covenant on the one side and on the other, are indispensable even for a hired fighter. The Feudal Baron, much more,—how could he subsist with mere temporary mercenaries round him, at sixpence a day; ready to go over to the other side, if sevenpence were offered? He could not have subsisted;—and his noble instinct saved

him from the necessity of even trying! The Feudal Baron had a Man's Soul in him; to which anarchy, mutiny, and the other fruits of temporary mercenaries, were intolerable: he had never been a Baron otherwise, but had continued a Chactaw and Bucanier. He felt it precious, and at last it became habitual, and his fruitful enlarged existence included it as a necessity, to have men round him who in heart loved him; whose life he watched over with rigour yet with love; who were prepared to give their life for him, if need came. It was beautiful; it was human! Man lives not otherwise, nor can live contented, anywhere or anywhen. Isolation is the sum-total of wretchedness to man. To be cut off, to be left solitary: to have a world alien, not your world; all a hostile camp for you; not a home at all, of hearts and faces who are yours, whose you are! It is the frightfullest enchantment; too truly a work of the Evil One. To have neither superior, nor inferior, nor equal, united manlike to you. Without father, without child, without brother. Man knows no sadder destiny. "How is each of us," exclaims Jean Paul,[7] "so lonely in the wide bosom of the All!" Encased each as in his transparent "ice-palace"; our brother visible in his, making signals and gesticulations to us;—visible, but for ever unattainable: on his bosom we shall never rest, nor he on ours. It was not a God that did this; no!

Awake, ye noble Workers, warriors in the one true war: all this must be remedied. It is you who are already half-alive, whom I will welcome into life; whom I will conjure in God's name to shake off your enchanted sleep, and live wholly! Cease to count scalps, gold-purses; not in these lies your or our salvation. Even these, if you count only these, will not be left. Let bucaniering be put far from you; alter, speedily abrogate all laws of the bucaniers, if you would gain any victory that shall endure. Let God's justice, let pity, nobleness and manly valour, with more gold-purses or with fewer, testify themselves in this your brief Life-transit to all the Eternities, the Gods and Silences. It is to you I call; for ye are not dead, ye are already half-alive: there is in you a sleepless dauntless energy, the prime-matter of all nobleness in man. Honour to you in your kind. It is to you I call: ye know at least this, That the mandate of God to

His creature man is: Work! The future Epic of the World rests not with those that are near dead, but with those that are alive, and those that are coming into life.

Look around you. Your world-hosts are all in mutiny, in confusion, destitution; on the eve of fiery wreck and madness! They will not march farther for you, on the sixpence a day and supply-and-demand principle; they will not; nor ought they, nor can they. Ye shall reduce them to order, begin reducing them. To order, to just subordination; noble loyalty in return for noble guidance. Their souls are driven nigh mad; let yours be sane and ever saner. Not as a bewildered bewildering mob; but as a firm regimented mass, with real captains over them, will these men march any more. All human interests, combined human endeavours, and social growths in this world, have, at a certain stage of their development, required organizing: and Work, the grandest of human interests, does now require it.

God knows, the task will be hard: but no noble task was ever easy. This task will wear away your lives, and the lives of your sons and grandsons: but for what purpose, if not for tasks like this, were lives given to men? Ye shall cease to count your thousand-pound scalps, the noble of you shall cease! Nay, the very scalps, as I say, will not long be left if you count on these. Ye shall cease wholly to be barbarous vulturous Chactaws, and become noble European Nineteenth-Century Men. Ye shall know that Mammon, in never such gigs[8] and flunkey "respectabilities," is not the alone God; that of himself he is but a Devil, and even a Brute-god.

Difficult? Yes, it will be difficult. The short-fibre cotton; that too was difficult. The waste cotton-shrub, long useless, disobedient, as the thistle by the wayside,—have ye not conquered it; made it into beautiful bandana webs; white woven shirts for men; bright-tinted air-garments wherein flit goddesses? Ye have shivered mountains asunder, made the hard iron pliant to you as soft putty: the Forest-giants, Marsh-jötuns bear sheaves of golden grain; Aegir the Seademon[9] himself stretches his back for a sleek highway to you, and on Firehorses and Windhorses ye career. Ye are most strong.

Thor red-bearded, with his blue sun-eyes, with his cheery heart and strong thunder-hammer, he and you have prevailed. Ye are most strong, ye Sons of the icy North, of the far East,—far marching from your rugged Eastern Wildernesses, hitherward from the grey Dawn of Time! Ye are Sons of the *Jötun-land*; the land of Difficulties Conquered. Difficult? You must try this thing. Once try it with the understanding that it will and shall have to be done. Try it as ye try the paltrier thing, making of money! I will bet on you once more, against all Jötuns, Tailor-gods,[1] Double-barrelled Law-wards, and Denizens of Chaos whatsoever.

1843 1843

Endnotes

- Note 1: From book 4, chap. 4.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A London hatter's mode of advertising.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Periods of violent fluctuation in the stock market caused by unsound speculating.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Machines used to prepare cotton or wool for spinning.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Teufelsdröckh, the hero of *Sartor Resartus* (1833–34).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Giants of Scandinavian mythology.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A reference to a Muslim story in which members of a tribe living near the Dead Sea were transformed into apes because they had ignored the prophecies of Moses.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The river of forgetfulness in the classical underworld.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Satan's appeal to the devils in Milton's *Paradise Lost* 1.330.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Buccaneers.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In 1819 a large open-air labor meeting in Manchester was broken up by charging cavalry. Thirteen men and women were massacred, and many others were wounded. "Bushing":

protecting game from poachers who use nets, by positioning bushes or branches on the grounds.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: That is, the only concern of the landed aristocrats is to keep trespassers off their game preserves and reserve shooting rights to themselves.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The "sliding scale" refers to the system of variable tariffs within the Corn Laws that benefited the aristocratic landlords. "Hansard's-jargon": parliamentary oratory, as in Hansard's printed record of debates in the Houses of Parliament.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The message of the miraculous writing on the wall in Daniel 5.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Homes for disabled veterans.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Jean Paul Richter (1763–1825), German humorist.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Light carriages; to own one was a sign of respectability.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: From Scandinavian mythology.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: False gods.Return to reference 1

MARY SEACOLE
1805–1881

Mary Seacole had an extraordinary life. Of African and European heritage, she was born Mary Jane Grant in Jamaica at a time when roughly 90 percent of the island's population was enslaved (the abolition of slavery in British colonies came in 1834, followed by four years of enforced apprenticeship). Never enslaved herself, Seacole did however work from an early age, gaining expertise in all aspects of domestic management at her mother's boardinghouse in Kingston. Close to Up Park, the headquarters of the British West India Regiments, the lodging attracted British officers and their wives, not least because Seacole's mother was a skilled "doctress," adept at treating tropical illnesses and other conditions. Here Seacole learned the nursing and healing arts, including the preparation and administering of medicines, that would later make her famous. She married in 1836 but became a widow just eight years later. After her mother's death in 1848, Seacole ran the boardinghouse alone, continuing to provide medical care that was especially needed during Jamaica's devastating cholera epidemic in 1850. With a marked entrepreneurial bent and a passion for travel, Seacole then spent much of the next decade in two charged geographical areas—initially in the tract of land between north and south America that is now Panama, and subsequently, from early 1855 to late 1856, in the regions around the Black Sea, at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. These journeys placed her squarely

in two tumultuous theaters of world history: first, the frenzy of activities occasioned by gold-mining fever in California and central America, and second, the desperate fighting of the Crimean War.

The celebrity of Mary Seacole in the Victorian era and today rests primarily on her time in Crimea. Ultimately a battle over the balance of power in Europe, the Crimean War was sparked by a quarrel about the rights of Christian minorities in Palestine, then part of the Ottoman Empire. Angered by a perceived affront to the Eastern Orthodox Church, Tsar Nicholas I of Russia sent troops in 1853 into Ottoman-controlled territories in what is now Romania. The Ottomans declared war on Russia in October of that year; four months later the British and the French followed suit, fearing the collapse of the Ottomans and the spread of Russian control across the region and over the crucial land route to India. For the next two years the conflict, especially an eleven-month siege of the city of Sebastopol, was brutal and bloody, with heavy casualties on all sides. Disease, frostbite, and malnutrition also caused terrible suffering.

Thanks to the Irish journalist William H. Russell, considered the world's first modern war correspondent, readers of the London *Times* received regular reports of sick and wounded British soldiers and the shortage of medical staff to attend them. Seacole was in London in 1854, looking into her unprofitable gold investments; her longstanding allegiance to the British military, formed in those early days in Jamaica prompted her to volunteer for the nursing duties that Florence Nightingale, famously, had begun to organize. But, as her memoir piquantly relates, she was rejected. It is highly likely that the color of her skin was a factor; some have suggested that her candidacy was also discounted because she made no formal application, had no hospital experience, and was past the usual age for nursing. Undaunted, she decided to go anyway. Her business strategy, as it had been in Panama, was to set up an establishment selling food, drink, and other necessaries; the first aid she provided, free of charge if needed, ran alongside, and was to a degree financed by, her commercial concerns. News of her kindness and

skill as a nurse and healer soon spread, to soldiers of all ranks and members of the army service corps alike. Moreover her "British Hotel"—in actuality more of a restaurant-cum-canteen-cum-general store—had the signal advantage of being close to the fighting (although in time Nightingale set up two nursing establishments on the Crimean peninsula, the army's primary hospital was three to four days' travel away in Scutari, across the Black Sea in Turkey). Nightingale's pioneering reforms of nursing resulted in her transformation into an icon of feminine care, "The Lady With the Lamp" who visited the beds of the wounded at night, but the dedicated work of "Mother Seacole" also played an undeniable role in the amelioration of suffering.

The war sections of *The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole* thus provide an important challenge to the British cultural myth that enshrined Nightingale as the Crimea's only Victorian heroine, but attention to the memoir's earlier depiction of Seacole's experiences in Panama is also rewarding. Her analysis of the complex social and racial structures in the chaotic settlements through which she passed is shrewd and searching; similarly forthright is Seacole's stout rejection of the racist attitudes held by the majority of White Americans (the "Yankees") she met on her travels. Startling in a different way is an account of a postmortem dissection she conducted on the corpse of a child who had died from cholera. Living at a time long before any medical school would have accepted a woman, much less a woman of color, as a student, Seacole took matters into her own hands, the better to understand the internal workings of disease.

The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole is a spirited and fast-paced read, written in 1857 to appeal to a British audience at a moment of financial need for its author (she had been left bankrupt, with large quantities of supplies she could not sell, when the defeated Russians sued for peace in March 1856 and the war came to a sudden end). Thanks to the success of the book, plus funds for her support contributed by high-profile friends she had gained during her time in Crimea, Seacole eventually received enough

money to live on. She continued to travel, returning to Panama and Jamaica, but resided mainly in London from 1865 onward. Seacole died there in lodgings at the age of seventy-six.

Although commemorated in Jamaica, Seacole's contribution to the British war effort was almost entirely overlooked in Britain for over a century until activists and scholars brought her back into public consciousness, notably via Ziggi Alexander and Audrey Dewjee's edition of *The Wonderful Adventures* in 1984. A painting of Seacole from 1869 was re-discovered in 2003 and is now on display in London's National Portrait Gallery. She is further honored in Britain's capital by a number of plaques, including one in Brixton, a district of south London that is home to many Britons of Jamaican or other West Indian heritage, and, since 2016, by a large statue directly facing the Houses of Parliament on the grounds of St. Thomas' Hospital, the former site of the Nightingale Training School for Nurses.

From The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands

Chapter I

MY BIRTH AND PARENTAGE—EARLY TASTES AND TRAVELS—MARRIAGE, AND WIDOWHOOD.

I was born in the town of Kingston, in the island of Jamaica, some time in the present century. As a female, and a widow, I may be well excused giving the precise date of this important event. But I do not mind confessing that the century and myself were both young together, and that we have grown side by side into age and consequence. I am a Creole,[1] and have good Scotch blood coursing in my veins. My father was a soldier, of an old Scotch family; and to him I often trace my affection for a camp-life, and my sympathy with what I have heard my friends call "the pomp, pride, and circumstance of glorious war."[2] Many people have also traced to my Scotch blood that energy and activity which are not always found in the Creole race, and which have carried me to so many varied scenes: and perhaps they are right. I have often heard the term "lazy Creole" applied to my country people; but I am sure I do not know what it is to be indolent. All my life long I have followed the impulse which led me to be up and doing; and so far from resting idle anywhere, I have never wanted[3] inclination to rove, nor will powerful enough to find a way to carry out my wishes. That these qualities have led me into many countries, and brought me into some strange and amusing adventures, the reader, if he or she has the patience to get through this book, will see. Some people, indeed, have called me quite a female Ulysses.[4] I believe that they intended it as a compliment; but from my experience of the Greeks, I do not consider it a very flattering one.

It is not my intention to dwell at any length upon the recollections of my childhood. My mother kept a boarding-house in Kingston, and was, like very many of the Creole women, an admirable doctress; in high repute with the officers of both services, and their wives, who were from time to time stationed at Kingston.

It was very natural that I should inherit her tastes; and so I had from early youth a yearning for medical knowledge and practice which has never deserted me. When I was a very young child I was taken by an old lady, who brought me up in her household among her own grandchildren, and who could scarcely have shown me more kindness had I been one of them; indeed, I was so spoiled by my kind patroness that, but for being frequently with my mother, I might very likely have grown up idle and useless. But I saw so much of her, and of her patients, that the ambition to become a doctress early took firm root in my mind; and I was very young when I began to make use of the little knowledge I had acquired from watching my mother, upon a great sufferer—my doll. I have noticed always what actors children are. If you leave one alone in a room, how soon it clears a little stage; and, making an audience out of a few chairs and stools, proceeds to act its childish griefs and blandishments upon its doll. So I also made good use of my dumb companion and confidante; and whatever disease was most prevalent in Kingston, be sure my poor doll soon contracted it. I have had many medical triumphs in later days, and saved some valuable lives; but I really think that few have given me more real gratification than the rewarding glow of health which my fancy used to picture stealing over my patient's waxen face after long and precarious illness.

Before long it was very natural that I should seek to extend my practice; and so I found other patients in the dogs and cats around me. Many luckless brutes were made to simulate diseases which were raging among their owners, and had forced down their reluctant throats the remedies which I deemed most likely to suit their supposed complaints. And after a time I rose still higher in my ambition; and despairing of finding another human patient, I proceeded to try my simples[5] and essences upon—myself.

When I was about twelve years old I was more frequently at my mother's house, and used to assist her in her duties; very often sharing with her the task of attending upon invalid officers or their wives, who came to her house from the adjacent camp at Up-Park, or the military station at Newcastle.[6]

As I grew into womanhood, I began to indulge that longing to travel which will never leave me while I have health and vigour. I was never weary of tracing upon an old map the route to England; and never followed with my gaze the stately ships homeward bound without longing to be in them, and see the blue hills of Jamaica fade into the distance. At that time it seemed most improbable that these girlish wishes should be gratified; but circumstances, which I need not explain, enabled me to accompany some relatives to England while I was yet a very young woman.

I shall never forget my first impressions of London. Of course, I am not going to bore the reader with them; but they are as vivid now as though the year 18— (I had very nearly let my age slip then) had not been long ago numbered with the past. Strangely enough, some of the most vivid of my recollections are the efforts of the London street-boys to poke fun at my and my companion's complexion. I am only a little brown—a few shades duskier than the brunettes whom you all admire so much; but my companion was very dark, and a fair (if I can apply the term to her) subject for their rude wit. She was hot-tempered, poor thing! and as there were no policemen to awe the boys and turn our servants' heads in those days, our progress through the London streets was sometimes a rather chequered one.

I remained in England, upon the occasion of my first visit, about a year; and then returned to Kingston. Before long I again started for London, bringing with me this time a large stock of West Indian preserves and pickles for sale. After remaining two years here, I again started home; and on the way my life and adventures were very nearly brought to a premature conclusion. Christmas-day had been kept very merrily on board our ship the "Velusia;" and on the following day a fire broke out in the hold. I dare say it would have resisted all the crew's efforts to put it out, had not another ship appeared in sight; upon which the fire quietly allowed itself to be extinguished. Although considerably alarmed, I did not lose my senses; but during the time when the contest between fire and water was doubtful, I entered into an amicable arrangement with

the ship's cook, whereby, in consideration of two pounds—which I was not, however, to pay until the crisis arrived—he agreed to lash me on to a large hen-coop.

Before I had been long in Jamaica I started upon other trips, many of them undertaken with a view to gain. Thus I spent some time in New Providence,[7] bringing home with me a large collection of handsome shells and rare shell-work, which created quite a sensation in Kingston, and had a rapid sale; I visited also Hayti and Cuba. But I hasten onward in my narrative.

Returned to Kingston, I nursed my old indulgent patroness in her last long illness. After she died, in my arms, I went to my mother's house, where I stayed, making myself useful in a variety of ways, and learning a great deal of Creole medicinal art, until I couldn't find courage to say "no" to a certain arrangement timidly proposed by Mr. Seacole, but married him, and took him down to Black River,[8] where we established a store. Poor man! he was very delicate; and before I undertook the charge of him, several doctors had expressed most unfavourable opinions of his health. I kept him alive by kind nursing and attention as long as I could; but at last he grew so ill that we left Black River, and returned to my mother's house at Kingston. Within a month of our arrival there he died. This was my first great trouble, and I felt it bitterly. For days I never stirred—lost to all that passed around me in a dull stupor of despair. If you had told me that the time would soon come when I should remember this sorrow calmly, I should not have believed it possible: and yet it was so. I do not think that we hot-blooded Creoles sorrow less for showing it so impetuously; but I do think that the sharp edge of our grief wears down sooner than theirs who preserve an outward demeanour of calmness, and nurse their woe secretly in their hearts.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Although "Creole" was used variously in the period to describe members of any non-Indigenous group born in the West Indies (regardless of whether they were of entirely

African, European, or mixed descent), here Seacole is using the term to describe a person of mixed African and European descent.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: See Shakespeare, *Othello* 3.3.354: "pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Lacked.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The Roman name for Odysseus, whose wanderings are recounted in Homer's *Odyssey.*Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Medicines made from herbs.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A military camp in Jamaica's Blue Mountains. "Up-Park": the headquarters, in Kingston, of the British West India Regiments.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: An island in the Bahamas.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A Jamaican town about ninety miles east of Kingston. "Mr. Seacole": Mary Jane Grant married Edwin Horatio Hamilton Seacole in 1836; he died in 1844.Return to reference 8

From *Chapter II*

STRUGGLES FOR LIFE—THE CHOLERA IN JAMAICA—I LEAVE KINGSTON FOR THE ISTHMUS OF PANAMA—CHAGRES, NAVY BAY, AND GATUN—LIFE IN PANAMA—UP THE RIVER CHAGRES TO GORGONA AND CRUCES.

I had one other great grief to master—the loss of my mother, and then I was left alone to battle with the world as best I might. The struggles which it cost me to succeed in life were sometimes very trying; nor have they ended yet. But I have always turned a bold front to fortune, and taken, and shall continue to take, as my brave friends in the army and navy have shown me how, "my hurts before."[1] Although it was no easy thing for a widow to make ends meet, I never allowed myself to know what repining or depression was, and so succeeded in gaining not only my daily bread, but many comforts besides from the beginning. Indeed, my experience of the world—it is not finished yet, but I do not think it will give me reason to change my opinion—leads me to the conclusion that it is by no means the hard bad world which some selfish people would have us believe it. It may be as my editor says—

"That gently comes the world to those
That are cast in gentle mould";[2]

hinting at the same time, politely, that the rule may apply to me personally. And perhaps he is right, for although I was always a hearty, strong woman—plain-spoken people might say stout—I think my heart is soft enough.

How slowly and gradually I succeeded in life, need not be told at length. My fortunes underwent the variations which befall all. Sometimes I was rich one day, and poor the next. I never thought too exclusively of money, believing rather that we were born to be happy, and that the surest way to be wretched is to prize it overmuch. Had I done so, I should have mourned over many a promising speculation proving a failure, over many a pan of

preserves or guava jelly burnt in the making; and perhaps lost my mind when the great fire of 1843, which devastated Kingston, burnt down my poor home. As it was, I very nearly lost my life, for I would not leave my house until every chance of saving it had gone, and it was wrapped in flames. But, of course, I set to work again in a humbler way, and rebuilt my house by degrees, and restocked it, succeeding better than before; for I had gained a reputation as a skilful nurse and doctress, and my house was always full of invalid officers and their wives from Newcastle, or the adjacent Up-Park Camp. Sometimes I had a naval or military surgeon under my roof, from whom I never failed to glean instruction, given, when they learned my love for their profession, with a readiness and kindness I am never likely to forget. Many of these kind friends are alive now. I met with some when my adventures had carried me to the battle-fields of the Crimea; and to those whose eyes may rest upon these pages I again offer my acknowledgments for their past kindness, which helped me to be useful to my kind[3] in many lands.

And here I may take the opportunity of explaining that it was from a confidence in my own powers, and not at all from necessity, that I remained an unprotected female. Indeed, I do not mind confessing to my reader, in a friendly confidential way, that one of the hardest struggles of my life in Kingston was to resist the pressing candidates for the late Mr. Seacole's shoes.

Officers of high rank sometimes took up their abode in my house. Others of inferior rank were familiar with me, long before their bravery, and, alas! too often death, in the Crimea, made them world famous. There were few officers of the 97th[4] to whom Mother Seacole was not well known, before she joined them in front of Sebastopol; and among the best known was good-hearted, loveable, noble H—— V——,[5] whose death shocked me so terribly, and with whose useful heroic life the English public have become so familiar. I can hear the ring of his boyish laughter even now.

In the year 1850, the cholera swept over the island of Jamaica with terrible force. Our idea—perhaps an unfounded one—was, that a steamer from New Orleans was the means of introducing it into

the island. Anyhow, they sent some clothes on shore to be washed, and poor Dolly Johnson, the washerwoman, whom we all knew, sickened and died of the terrible disease. While the cholera raged, I had but too many opportunities of watching its nature, and from a Dr. B——, who was then lodging in my house, received many hints as to its treatment which I afterwards found invaluable.

Early in the same year my brother had left Kingston for the Isthmus of Panama, then the great high-road to and from golden California, where he had established a considerable store and hotel. Ever since he had done so, I had found some difficulty in checking my reviving disposition to roam, and at last persuading myself that I might be of use to him (he was far from strong), I resigned my house into the hands of a cousin, and made arrangements to journey to Chagres.[6] Having come to this conclusion, I allowed no grass to grow beneath my feet, but set to work busily, for I was not going to him empty-handed. My house was full for weeks, of tailors, making up rough coats, trousers, etc., and sempstresses cutting out and making shirts. In addition to these, my kitchen was filled with busy people, manufacturing preserves, guava jelly, and other delicacies, while a considerable sum was invested in the purchase of preserved meats, vegetables, and eggs. It will be as well, perhaps, if I explain, in as few words as possible, the then condition of the Isthmus of Panama.

All my readers must know—a glance at the map will show it to those who do not—that between North America and the envied shores of California stretches a little neck of land, insignificant-looking enough on the map, dividing the Atlantic from the Pacific. By crossing this, the travellers from America avoided a long, weary, and dangerous sea voyage round Cape Horn, or an almost impossible journey by land.

But that journey across the Isthmus, insignificant in distance as it was, was by no means an easy one. It seemed as if nature had determined to throw every conceivable obstacle in the way of those who should seek to join the two great oceans of the world. I have read and heard many accounts of old endeavours to effect this

important and gigantic work, and how miserably they failed. It was reserved for the men of our age to accomplish what so many had died in attempting, and iron and steam, twin giants, subdued to man's will, have put a girdle over rocks and rivers, so that travellers can glide as smoothly, if not as inexpensively, over the once terrible Isthmus of Darien, as they can from London to Brighton.[7] Not yet, however, does civilization rule at Panama. The weak sway of the New Granada Republic,[8] despised by lawless men, and respected by none, is powerless to control the refuse of every nation which meet together upon its soil. Whenever they feel inclined now they overpower the law easily; but seven years ago, when I visited the Isthmus of Panama, things were much worse, and a licence existed, compared to which the present lawless state of affairs is enviable.

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Endnotes

- Note 1: Unidentified quotation.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Tennyson, "To J. S." (1832), lines 3–4.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, humankind.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Stationed in Gibraltar, the Ionian Islands, Jamaica, and North America from 1841 to 1853, the 97th (earl of Ulster's) Regiment of Foot was an infantry regiment of the British Army that fought in the Crimea from 1854 onward.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Hedley Vicars (1826–1855) died in action at Sebastopol. Catherine M. Marsh (1818–1912) immediately wrote a book about the short life of this deeply religious soldier; *The Memorials of Captain Hedley Vicars* enjoyed large sales and was re-published in numerous languages.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: At this time, the chief Atlantic port on the Isthmus of Panama (also known as the Isthmus of Darien).Return to reference 6

- Note 7: The Panama Railroad was built between 1850 and 1855.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: From 1831 to 1858, an independent country consisting primarily of present-day Colombia and Panama, plus small portions of present-day Costa Rica, Ecuador, Venezuela, Peru, and Brazil.Return to reference 8

From *Chapter IV*

AN UNWELCOME VISITOR IN CRUCES—THE CHOLERA—SUCCESS OF THE YELLOW DOCTRESS—FEARFUL SCENE AT THE MULE-OWNER'S—THE BURYING PARTIES—THE CHOLERA ATTACKS ME.

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But it was destined that I should not be long in Cruces before my medicinal skill and knowledge were put to the test.[1] Before the passengers for Panama had been many days gone, it was found that they had left one of their number behind them, and that one—the cholera. I believe that the faculty[2] have not yet come to the conclusion that the cholera is contagious, and I am not presumptuous enough to forestall them; but my people have always considered it to be so, and the poor Cruces folks did not hesitate to say that this new and terrible plague had been a fellow-traveller with the Americans from New Orleans or some other of its favoured haunts. I had the first intimation of its unwelcome presence in the following abrupt and unpleasant manner:—

A Spaniard, an old and intimate friend of my brother, had supped with him one evening, and upon returning home had been taken ill, and after a short period of intense suffering had died. So sudden and so mysterious a death gave rise to the rumour that he had been poisoned, and suspicion rested for a time, perhaps not unnaturally, upon my brother, in whose company the dead man had last been. Anxious for many reasons—the chief one, perhaps, the position of my brother—I went down to see the corpse. A single glance at the poor fellow showed me the terrible truth. The distressed face, sunken eyes, cramped limbs, and discoloured shrivelled skin were all symptoms which I had been familiar with very recently; and at once I pronounced the cause of death to be cholera. The Cruces people were mightily angry with me for expressing such an opinion; even my brother, although it relieved him of the odium of a great crime,

was as annoyed as the rest. But by twelve o'clock that morning one of the Spaniard's friends was attacked similarly, and the very people who had been most angry with me a few hours previously, came to me now eager for advice. There was no doctor in Cruces; the nearest approach to one was a little timid dentist, who was there by accident, and who refused to prescribe for the sufferer, and I was obliged to do my best. Selecting from my medicine chest—I never travel anywhere without it—what I deemed necessary, I went hastily to the patient, and at once adopted the remedies I considered fit. It was a very obstinate case, but by dint of mustard emetics, warm fomentations,[3] mustard plasters on the stomach and the back, and calomel,[4] at first in large then in gradually smaller doses, I succeeded in saving my first cholera patient in Cruces.

For a few days the terrible disease made such slow progress amongst us that we almost hoped it had passed on its way and spared us; but all at once it spread rapidly, and affrighted faces and cries of woe soon showed how fatally the destroyer was at work. And in so great request were my services, that for days and nights together I scarcely knew what it was to enjoy two successive hours' rest.

And here I must pause to set myself right with my kind reader. He or she will not, I hope, think that, in narrating these incidents, I am exalting my poor part in them unduly. I do not deny (it is the only thing indeed that I have to be proud of) that I *am* pleased and gratified when I look back upon my past life, and see times now and then, and places here and there, when and where I have been enabled to benefit my fellow-creatures suffering from ills my skill could often remedy. Nor do I think that the kind reader will consider this feeling an unworthy one. If it be so, and if, in the following pages, the account of what Providence has given me strength to do on larger fields of action be considered vain or egotistical, still I cannot help narrating them, for my share in them appears to be the one and only claim I have to interest the public ear. Moreover I shall be sadly disappointed, if those years of life which may be still in store for me are not permitted by Providence to be devoted to

similar usefulness. I am not ashamed to confess—for the gratification is, after all, a selfish one—that I love to be of service to those who need a woman's help. And wherever the need arises—on whatever distant shore—I ask no greater or higher privilege than to minister to it. After this explanation, I resume more freely the account of my labours in Cruces.

It was scarcely surprising that the cholera should spread rapidly, for fear is its powerful auxiliary, and the Cruces people bowed down before the plague in slavish despair. The Americans and other foreigners in the place showed a brave front, but the natives, constitutionally cowardly, made not the feeblest show of resistance. Beyond filling the poor church, and making the priests bring out into the streets figures of tawdry dirty saints, supposed to possess some miraculous influence which they never exerted, before which they prostrated themselves, invoking their aid with passionate prayers and cries, they did nothing. Very likely the saints would have got the credit of helping them if they had helped themselves; but the poor cowards never stirred a finger to clean out their close, reeking huts, or rid the damp streets of the rotting accumulation of months. I think their chief reliance was on "the yellow woman from Jamaica with the cholera medicine." Nor was this surprising; for the Spanish doctor, who was sent for from Panama, became nervous and frightened at the horrors around him, and the people soon saw that he was not familiar with the terrible disease he was called upon to do battle with, and preferred trusting to one who was.

It must be understood that many of those who could afford to pay for my services did so handsomely, but the great majority of my patients had nothing better to give their doctress than thanks. The best part of my practice lay amongst the American store and hotel keepers, the worst among the native boatmen and muleteers.[5] These latter died by scores, and among them I saw some scenes of horror I would fain forget, if it were possible. One terrible night, passed with some of them, has often haunted me. I will endeavour to narrate it, and should the reader be supposed to think it highly coloured and doubtful, I will only tell him that, terrible as it seems, I

saw almost as fearful scenes on the Crimean peninsula among British men, a few thousand miles only from comfort and plenty.

It was late in the evening when the largest mule-owner in Cruces came to me and implored me to accompany him to his kraal,[6] a short distance from the town, where he said some of his men were dying. One in particular, his head muleteer, a very valuable servant, he was most selfishly anxious for, and, on the way thither, promised me a large remuneration if I should succeed in saving him. Our journey was not a long one, but it rained hard, and the fields were flooded, so that it took us some time to reach the long, low hut which he called his home. I would rather not see such another scene as the interior of that hut presented. Its roof scarcely sheltered its wretched inmates from the searching rain; its floor was the damp, rank turf, trodden by the mules' hoofs and the muleteers' feet into thick mud. Around, in dirty hammocks, and on the damp floor, were the inmates of this wretched place, male and female, the strong and the sick together, breathing air that nearly choked me, accustomed as I had grown to live in impure atmosphere; for beneath the same roof the mules, more valuable to their master than his human servants, were stabled, their fore-feet locked, and beside them were heaps of saddles, packs, and harness. The groans of the sufferers and the anxiety and fear of their comrades were so painful to hear and witness, that for a few minutes I felt an almost uncontrollable impulse to run out into the stormy night, and flee from this plague-spot. But the weak feeling vanished, and I set about my duty. The mule-owner was so frightened that he did not hesitate to obey orders, and, by my directions, doors and shutters were thrown open, fires were lighted, and every effort made to ventilate the place; and then, with the aid of the frightened women, I applied myself to my poor patients. Two were beyond my skill. Death alone could give them relief. The others I could help. But no words of mine could induce them to bear their terrible sufferings like men. They screamed and groaned, not like women, for few would have been so craven-hearted, but like children; calling, in the intervals of violent pain, upon Jesu, the Madonna, and all the saints of heaven whom

their lives had scandalised. I stayed with them until midnight, and then got away for a little time. But I had not long been quiet, before the mule-master was after me again. The men were worse; would I return with him. The rain was drifting heavily on the thatched roof, as it only does in tropical climates, and I was tired to death; but I could not resist his appeal. He had brought with him a pair of tall, thick boots, in which I was to wade through the flooded fields; and with some difficulty I again reached the kraal. I found the worst cases sinking fast, one of the others had relapsed, while fear had paralysed the efforts of the rest. At last I restored some order; and, with the help of the bravest of the women, fixed up rude screens around the dying men. But no screens could shut out from the others their awful groans and cries for the aid that no mortal power could give them. So the long night passed away; first a deathlike stillness behind one screen, and then a sudden silence behind the other, showing that the fierce battle with death was over, and who had been the victor. And, meanwhile, I sat before the flickering fire, with my last patient in my lap—a poor, little, brown-faced orphan infant, scarce a year old, was dying in my arms, and I was powerless to save it. It may seem strange, but it is a fact, that I thought more of that little child than I did of the men who were struggling for their lives, and prayed very earnestly and solemnly to God to spare it. But it did not please Him to grant my prayer, and towards morning the wee spirit left this sinful world for the home above it had so lately left, and what was mortal of the little infant lay dead in my arms. Then it was that I began to think—how the idea first arose in my mind I can hardly say—that, if it were possible to take this little child and examine it, I should learn more of the terrible disease which was sparing neither young nor old, and should know better how to do battle with it. I was not afraid to use my baby patient thus. I knew its fled spirit would not reproach me, for I had done all I could for it in life—had shed tears over it, and prayed for it.

It was cold grey dawn, and the rain had ceased, when I followed the man who had taken the dead child away to bury it, and bribed him to carry it by an unfrequented path down to the river-side, and

accompany me to the thick retired bush on the opposite bank. Having persuaded him thus much, it was not difficult, with the help of silver arguments to convince him that it would be for the general benefit and his own, if I could learn from this poor little thing the secret inner workings of our common foe; and ultimately he stayed by me, and aided me in my first and last *post mortem* examination. It seems a strange deed to accomplish, and I am sure I could not wield the scalpel or the substitute I then used now, but at that time the excitement had strung my mind up to a high pitch of courage and determination; and perhaps the daily, almost hourly, scenes of death had made me somewhat callous. I need not linger on this scene, nor give the readers the results of my operation; although novel to me, and decidedly useful, they were what every medical man well knows.

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Endnotes

- Note 1: Sections of chapter II and chapter III, omitted here, describe Seacole's difficult journey with her servant Mac and maid Mary through Panama to the town of Cruces, where her brother had established his hotel.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, medical science.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Poultice (archaic).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Mercurous chloride, used at this time as a purgative.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Mule drivers.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Enclosure for animals (colonial Dutch).Return to reference 6

From *Chapter VI*

MIGRATION TO GORGONA—FAREWELL DINNERS AND SPEECHES—A BUILDING SPECULATION—LIFE IN GORGONA—SYMPATHY WITH AMERICAN SLAVES—DR. CASEY IN TROUBLE—FLOODS AND FIRES—YANKEE INDEPENDENCE AND FREEDOM.

I remained at Cruces until the rainy months came to an end, and the river grew too shallow to be navigable by the boats higher up than Gorgona; and then we all made preparations for a flitting to that place. But before starting, it appeared to be the custom for the store and hotel keepers to exchange parting visits, and to many of these parties I, in virtue of my recent services to the community, received invitations. The most important social meeting took place on the anniversary of the declaration of American independence, at my brother's hotel, where a score of zealous Americans dined most heartily—as they never fail to do; and, as it was an especial occasion, drank champagne liberally at twelve shillings a bottle. And, after the usual patriotic toasts had been duly honoured, they proposed "the ladies," with an especial reference to myself, in a speech which I thought worth noting down at the time. The spokesman was a thin, sallow-looking American, with a pompous and yet rapid delivery, and a habit of turning over his words with his quid[1] before delivering them, and clearing his mouth after each sentence, perhaps to make room for the next. I shall beg the reader to consider that the blanks express the time expended on this operation. He dashed into his work at once, rolling up and getting rid of his sentences as he went on:—

"Well, gentlemen, I expect you'll all support me in a drinking of this toast that I du—. Aunty Seacole, gentlemen; I give you, Aunty Seacole—. We can't du less for her, after what she's done for us—, when the cholera was among us, gentlemen—, not many months ago—. So, I say, God bless the best yaller woman He ever made—, from Jamaica, gentlemen—, from the Isle of Springs[2]—Well, gentlemen, I expect there are only tu things we're vexed for—; and the first is, that she ain't one of us—, a citizen of the great United

States—; and the other thing is, gentlemen—, that Providence made her a yaller woman. I calculate, gentlemen, you're all as vexed as I am that she's not wholly white—, but I du reckon on your rejoicing with me that she's so many shades removed from being entirely black—; and I guess, if we could bleach her by any means we would —, and thus make her as acceptable in any company as she deserves to be—. Gentlemen, I give you Aunty Seacole!"

And so the orator sat down amidst much applause. It may be supposed that I did not need much persuasion to return thanks, burning, as I was, to tell them my mind on the subject of my colour. Indeed, if my brother had not checked me, I should have given them my thoughts somewhat too freely. As it was, I said:—

"Gentlemen,—I return you my best thanks for your kindness in drinking my health. As for what I have done in Cruces, Providence evidently made me to be useful, and I can't help it. But, I must say, that I don't altogether appreciate your friend's kind wishes with respect to my complexion. If it had been as dark as any n*****'s, I should have been just as happy and as useful, and as much respected by those whose respect I value; and as to his offer of bleaching me, I should, even if it were practicable, decline it without any thanks. As to the society which the process might gain me admission into, all I can say is, that, judging from the specimens I have met with here and elsewhere, I don't think that I shall lose much by being excluded from it. So, gentlemen, I drink to you and the general reformation of American manners."

I do not think that they altogether admired my speech, but I was a somewhat privileged person, and they laughed at it good-naturedly enough. Perhaps (for I was not in the best humour myself) I should have been better pleased if they had been angry.

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I may have before said that the citizens of the New Granada Republic had a strong prejudice against all Americans. It is not difficult to assign a cause for this. In the first place, many of the

negroes, fugitive from the Southern States, had sought refuge in this and the other States of Central America, where every profession was open to them; and as they were generally superior men—evinced perhaps by their hatred of their old condition and their successful flight—they soon rose to positions of eminence in New Granada. In the priesthood, in the army, in all municipal offices, the self-liberated negroes were invariably found in the foremost rank; and the people, for some reason—perhaps because they recognised in them superior talents for administration—always respected them more than, and preferred them to, their native rulers. So that, influenced naturally by these freed slaves, who bore themselves before their old masters bravely and like men, the New Granada people were strongly prejudiced against the Americans. And in the second and third places, they feared their quarrelsome, bullying habits—be it remembered that the crowds to California were of the lowest sorts, many of whom have since fertilised Cuban and Nicaraguan soil—and dreaded their schemes for annexation. To such an extent was this amusingly carried, that when the American Railway Company took possession of Navy Bay, and christened it Aspinwall,[3] after the name of their Chairman, the native authorities refused to recognise their right to name any portion of the Republic, and pertinaciously returned all letters directed to Aspinwall, with "no such place known" marked upon them in the very spot for which they were intended. And, in addition to this, the legal authorities refused to compel any defendant to appear who was described as of Aspinwall, and put every plaintiff out of court who described himself as residing in that unrecognised place.

Under these circumstances, my readers can easily understand that when any Americans crossed the Isthmus, accompanied by their slaves, the Cruces and Gorgona people were restlessly anxious to whisper into their ears offers of freedom and hints how easy escape would be. Nor were the authorities at all inclined to aid in the recapture of a runaway slave. So that, as it was necessary for the losers to go on with the crowd, the fugitive invariably escaped. It is one of the maxims of the New Granada constitution—as it is, I

believe, of the English—that on a slave touching its soil[4] his chains fall from him. Rather than irritate so dangerous a neighbour as America, this rule was rarely supported; but I remember the following instance of its successful application.

A young American woman, whose character can be best described by the word "vicious," fell ill at Gorgona, and was left behind by her companions under the charge of a young negro, her slave, whom she treated most inhumanly, as was evinced by the poor girl's frequent screams when under the lash. One night her cries were so distressing, that Gorgona could stand it no longer, but broke into the house and found the chattel bound hand and foot, naked, and being severely lashed. Despite the threats and astonishment of the mistress, they were both carried off on the following morning, before the alcalde,[5] himself a man of colour, and of a very humane disposition. When the particulars of the case were laid before him, he became strongly excited, and called upon the woman to offer an explanation of her cruelty. She treated it with the coolest unconcern—"The girl was her property, worth so many dollars, and a child at New Orleans; had misbehaved herself, and been properly corrected. The alcalde must be drunk or a fool, or both together, to interfere between an American and her property." Her coolness vanished, however, when the alcalde turned round to the girl and told her that she was free to leave her mistress when she liked; and when she heard the irrepressible cheering of the crowded court-hut at the alcalde's humanity and boldness, and saw the slave's face flush with delight at the judge's words, she became terribly enraged; made use of the most fearful threats, and would have wreaked summary vengeance on her late chattel had not the clumsy soldiery interfered. Then, with demoniac refinement of cruelty, she bethought herself of the girl's baby at New Orleans still in her power, and threatened most horrible torture to the child if its mother dared to accept the alcalde's offer.

The poor girl trembled and covered her face with her hands, as though to shut out some fearful sight, and, I think, had we not persuaded her to the contrary, that she would have sacrificed her

newly won freedom for the child's sake. But we knew very well that when the heat of passion had subsided, the threatener would be too 'cute[6] to injure her own property; and at once set afloat a subscription for the purchase of the child. The issue of the tale I do not know, as the woman was very properly removed into the interior of the country.

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Shortly after this, tired to death of life in Panama, I handed over my hotel to my brother, and returned to Kingston.[7] On the way thither I experienced another instance of American politeness, which I cannot help recording; first reminding my readers of what I have previously said of the character of the Californian travellers. Anxious to get home quickly, I took my passage in the first steamer that left Navy Bay—an American one; and late in the evening said farewell to the friends I had been staying with, and went on board. A very kind friend, an American merchant, doing a large business at Navy Bay, had tried hard to persuade me to delay my journey until the English company's steamer called; without, however, giving any good reasons for his wish. So, with Mac and my little maid, I passed through the crowd of female passengers on deck, and sought the privacy of the saloon. Before I had been long there, two ladies came to me, and in their cool, straightforward manner, questioned me.

"Where air you going?"

"To Kingston."

"And how air you going?"

"By sea."

"Don't be impertinent, yaller woman. By what conveyance air you going?"

"By this steamer, of course. I've paid for my passage."

They went away with this information; and in a short time eight or nine others came and surrounded me, asking the same questions. My answers—and I was very particular—raised quite a storm of uncomplimentary remarks.

"Guess a n***** woman don't go along with us in this saloon," said one. "I never travelled with a n***** yet, and I expect I shan't begin now," said another; while some children had taken my little servant Mary in hand, and were practising on her the politenesses which their parents were favouring me with—only, as is the wont of children, they were crueller. I cannot help it if I shock my readers; but the *truth* is, that one positively spat in poor little Mary's frightened yellow face.

At last an old American lady came to where I sat, and gave me some staid advice. "Well, now, I tell you for your good, you'd better quit this, and not drive my people to extremities. If you do, you'll be sorry for it, I expect." Thus harassed, I appealed to the stewardess—a tall sour-looking woman, flat and thin as a dressed-up broomstick. She asked me sundry questions as to how and when I had taken my passage; until, tired beyond all endurance, I said, "My good woman, put me anywhere—under a boat—in your store-room, so that I can get to Kingston somehow." But the stewardess was not to be moved.

"There's nowhere but the saloon, and you can't expect to stay with the white people, that's clear. Flesh and blood can stand a good deal of aggravation; but not that. If the Britishers is so took up with coloured people, that's their business; but it won't do here."

This last remark was in answer to an Englishman, whose advice to me was not to leave my seat for any of them. He made matters worse; until at last I lost my temper, and calling Mac, bade him get my things together, and went up to the captain—a good honest man. He and some of the black crew and the black cook, who showed his teeth most viciously, were much annoyed. Muttering about its being a custom of the country, the captain gave me an order upon the agent for the money I had paid; and so, at twelve o'clock at night, I was landed again upon the wharf of Navy Bay.

My American friends were vastly annoyed, but not much surprised; and two days later, the English steamer, the "Eagle," in charge of my old friend, Captain B——, touched at Navy Bay, and carried me to Kingston.

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Endnotes

- Note 1: Portion of chewing tobacco (American).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Another name for Jamaica.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The “native authorities” called the town “Colón” (after Christopher Columbus); in time this name prevailed.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Seacole refers to the Mansfield judgment of 1772, which declared slavery to be illegal in England. Persons who were enslaved in other jurisdictions (including British colonies, where slavery was not abolished until 1833) became free once on English ground.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The mayor, magistrate, or chief administrative officer of a town in a Spanish-speaking region or country.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Acute, quick-witted in her own interest.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In sections omitted here, Seacole describes how she established a makeshift hotel in Gorgona.Return to reference 7

Chapter VIII

I LONG TO JOIN THE BRITISH ARMY BEFORE SEBASTOPOL—MY WANDERINGS ABOUT LONDON FOR THAT PURPOSE—HOW I FAIL—ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FIRM OF "DAY AND MARTIN"—I EMBARK FOR TURKEY.

Before I left Jamaica for Navy Bay, as narrated in the last chapter, war had been declared against Russia,[1] and we were all anxiously expecting news of a descent upon the Crimea. Now, no sooner had I heard of war somewhere, than I longed to witness it; and when I was told that many of the regiments I had known so well in Jamaica had left England for the scene of action, the desire to join them became stronger than ever. I used to stand for hours in silent thought before an old map of the world, in a little corner of which some one had chalked a red cross, to enable me to distinguish where the Crimea was; and as I traced the route thither, all difficulties would vanish. But when I came to talk over the project with my friends, the best scheme I could devise seemed so wild and improbable, that I was fain to resign my hopes for a time, and so started for Navy Bay.

But all the way to England, from Navy Bay, I was turning my old wish over and over in my mind; and when I found myself in London, in the autumn of 1854, just after the battle of Alma had been fought, and my old friends were fairly before the walls of Sebastopol, how to join them there took up far more of my thoughts than that visionary gold-mining speculation on the river Palmilla,[2] which seemed so feasible to us in New Granada, but was considered so wild and unprofitable a speculation in London. And, as time wore on, the inclination to join my old friends of the 97th, 48th, and other regiments, battling with worse foes than yellow fever or cholera, took such exclusive possession of my mind, that I threw over the gold speculation altogether, and devoted all my energies to my new scheme.

Heaven knows it was visionary enough! I had no friends who could help me in such a project—nay, who would understand why I

desired to go, and what I desired to do when I got there. My funds, although they might, carefully husbanded, carry me over the three thousand miles, and land me at Balaclava, would not support me there long; while to persuade the public that an unknown Creole woman would be useful to their army before Sebastopol was too improbable an achievement to be thought of for an instant. Circumstances, however, assisted me.

As the winter wore on, came hints from various quarters of mismanagement, want, and suffering in the Crimea; and after the battles of Balaclava and Inkermann, and the fearful storm of the 14th of November, the worst anticipations were realized. Then we knew that the hospitals were full to suffocation, that scarcity and exposure were the fate of all in the camp, and that the brave fellows for whom any of us at home would have split our last shilling, and shared our last meal, were dying thousands of miles away from the active sympathy of their fellow-countrymen. Fast and thick upon the news of Inkermann, fought by a handful of fasting and enfeebled men against eight times their number of picked Russians,[3] brought fresh and animated to the contest, and while all England was reeling beneath the shock of that fearful victory, came the sad news that hundreds were dying whom the Russian shot and sword had spared, and that the hospitals of Scutari were utterly unable to shelter, or their inadequate staff to attend to, the ship-loads of sick and wounded which were sent to them across the stormy Black Sea.

But directly England knew the worst, she set about repairing her past neglect. In every household busy fingers were working for the poor soldier—money flowed in golden streams wherever need was—and Christian ladies, mindful of the sublime example, "I was sick, and ye visited me,"[4] hastened to volunteer their services by those sick-beds which only women know how to soothe and bless.

Need I be ashamed to confess that I shared in the general enthusiasm, and longed more than ever to carry my busy (and the reader will not hesitate to add experienced) fingers where the sword or bullet had been busiest, and pestilence most rife. I had seen much of sorrow and death elsewhere, but they had never daunted

me; and if I could feel happy binding up the wounds of quarrelsome Americans and treacherous Spaniards, what delight should I not experience if I could be useful to my own "sons," suffering for a cause it was so glorious to fight and bleed for! I never stayed to discuss probabilities, or enter into conjectures as to my chances of reaching the scene of action. I made up my mind that if the army wanted nurses, they would be glad of me, and with all the ardour of my nature, which ever carried me where inclination prompted, I decided that I *would* go to the Crimea; and go I did, as all the world knows.

Of course, had it not been for my old strong-mindedness (which has nothing to do with obstinacy, and is in no way related to it—the best term I can think of to express it being "judicious decisiveness"), I should have given up the scheme a score of times in as many days; so regularly did each successive day give birth to a fresh set of rebuffs and disappointments. I shall make no excuse to my readers for giving them a pretty full history of my struggles to become a Crimean *heroine*!

My first idea (and knowing that I was well fitted for the work, and would be the right woman in the right place, the reader can fancy my audacity) was to apply to the War Office for the post of hospital nurse. Among the diseases which I understood were most prevalent in the Crimea were cholera, diarrhœa, and dysentery, all of them more or less known in tropical climates; and with which, as the reader will remember, my Panama experience had made me tolerably familiar. Now, no one will accuse me of presumption, if I say that I thought (and so it afterwards proved) that my knowledge of these human ills would not only render my services as a nurse more valuable, but would enable me to be of use to the overworked doctors. That others thought so too, I took with me ample testimony. I cannot resist the temptation of giving my readers one of the testimonials I had, it seems so eminently practical and to the point:—

"I became acquainted with Mrs. Seacole through the instrumentality of T. B. Cowan, Esq., H. B. M. Consul at Colon, on the

Isthmus of Panama, and have had many opportunities of witnessing her professional zeal and ability in the treatment of aggravated forms of tropical diseases.

"I am myself personally much indebted for her indefatigable kindness and skill at a time when I am apt to believe the advice of a practitioner qualified in the North would have little availed.

"Her peculiar fitness, in a constitutional point of view,[5] for the duties of a medical attendant, needs no comment.

(Signed) "A. G. M.,

"Late Medical Officer, West Granada Gold-mining Company."

So I made long and unwearied application at the War Office,[6] in blissful ignorance of the labour and time I was throwing away. I have reason to believe that I considerably interfered with the repose of sundry messengers, and disturbed, to an alarming degree, the official gravity of some nice gentlemanly young fellows, who were working out their salaries in an easy, off-hand way. But my ridiculous endeavours to gain an interview with the Secretary-at-War of course failed, and glad at last to oblige a distracted messenger, I transferred my attentions to the Quartermaster-General's department. Here I saw another gentleman, who listened to me with a great deal of polite enjoyment, and—his amusement ended—hinted, had I not better apply to the Medical Department; and accordingly I attached myself to their quarters with the same unwearying ardour. But, of course, I grew tired at last, and then I changed my plans.

Now, I am not for a single instant going to blame the authorities who would not listen to the offer of a motherly yellow woman to go to the Crimea and nurse her "sons" there, suffering from cholera, diarrhœa, and a host of lesser ills. In my country, where people know our use, it would have been different; but here it was natural enough—although I had references, and other voices spoke for me—that they should laugh, good-naturedly enough, at my offer. War, I know, is a serious game, but sometimes very humble actors are of great use in it, and if the reader, when he comes in time to peruse

the evidence of those who had to do with the Sebastopol drama, of my share in it, will turn back to this chapter, he will confess perhaps that, after all, the impulse which led me to the War Department was not unnatural.

My new scheme was, I candidly confess, worse devised than the one which had failed. Miss Nightingale had left England for the Crimea, but other nurses were still to follow, and my new plan was simply to offer myself to Mrs. H——[7] as a recruit. Feeling that I was one of the very women they most wanted, experienced and fond of the work, I jumped at once to the conclusion that they would gladly enrol me in their number. To go to Cox's, the army agents, who were most obliging to me, and obtain the Secretary-at-War's private address, did not take long; and that done, I laid the same pertinacious siege to his great house in —— Square, as I had previously done to his place of business.

Many a long hour did I wait in his great hall, while scores passed in and out; many of them looking curiously at me. The flunkeys,[8] noble creatures! marvelled exceedingly at the yellow woman whom no excuses could get rid of, nor impertinence dismay, and showed me very clearly that they resented my persisting in remaining there in mute appeal from their sovereign will. At last I gave that up, after a message from Mrs. H. that the full complement of nurses had been secured, and that my offer could not be entertained. Once again I tried, and had an interview this time with one of Miss Nightingale's companions. She gave me the same reply, and I read in her face the fact, that had there been a vacancy, I should not have been chosen to fill it.

As a last resort, I applied to the managers of the Crimean Fund to know whether they would give me a passage to the camp—once there I would trust to something turning up. But this failed also, and one cold evening I stood in the twilight, which was fast deepening into wintry night, and looked back upon the ruins of my last castle in the air. The disappointment seemed a cruel one. I was so conscious of the unselfishness of the motives which induced me to leave England—so certain of the service I could render among the sick

soldiery, and yet I found it so difficult to convince others of these facts. Doubts and suspicions arose in my heart for the first and last time, thank Heaven. Was it possible that American prejudices against colour had some root here? Did these ladies shrink from accepting my aid because my blood flowed beneath a somewhat duskier skin than theirs? Tears streamed down my foolish cheeks, as I stood in the fast thinning streets; tears of grief that any should doubt my motives—that Heaven should deny me the opportunity that I sought. Then I stood still, and looking upward through and through the dark clouds that shadowed London, prayed aloud for help. I dare say that I was a strange sight to the few passers-by, who hastened homeward through the gloom and mist of that wintry night. I dare say those who read these pages will wonder at me as much as they who saw me did; but you must all remember that I am one of an impulsive people, and find it hard to put that restraint upon my feelings which to you is so easy and natural.

The morrow, however, brought fresh hope. A good night's rest had served to strengthen my determination. Let what might happen, to the Crimea I would go. If in no other way, then would I upon my own responsibility and at my own cost. There were those there who had known me in Jamaica, who had been under my care; doctors who would vouch for my skill and willingness to aid them, and a general who had more than once helped me, and would do so still. Why not trust to their welcome and kindness, and start at once? If the authorities had allowed me, I would willingly have given them my services as a nurse; but as they declined them, should I not open an hotel for invalids in the Crimea in my own way? I had no more idea of what the Crimea was than the home authorities themselves perhaps, but having once made up my mind, it was not long before cards were printed and speeding across the Mediterranean to my friends before Sebastopol. Here is one of them:—

"BRITISH HOTEL.
MRS. MARY SEACOLE
(*Late of Kingston, Jamaica*),

Respectfully announces to her former kind friends, and to the Officers of the Army and Navy generally,

That she has taken her passage in the screw-steamer[9] "Hollander," to start from London on the 25th of January, intending on her arrival at Balaclava to establish a mess table[1] and comfortable quarters for sick and convalescent officers."

This bold programme would reach the Crimea in the end of January, at a time when any officer would have considered a stall in an English stable luxurious quarters compared to those he possessed, and had nearly forgotten the comforts of a mess-table. It must have read to them rather like a mockery, and yet, as the reader will see, I succeeded in redeeming my pledge.

While this new scheme was maturing, I again met Mr. Day[2] in England. He was bound to Balaclava upon some shipping business, and we came to the understanding that (if it were found desirable) we should together open a store as well as an hotel in the neighbourhood of the camp. So was originated the well-known firm of Seacole and Day (I am sorry to say, the camp wits dubbed it Day and Martin),[3] which, for so many months, did business upon the now deserted high-road from the then busy harbour of Balaclava to the front of the British army before Sebastopol.

These new arrangements were not allowed to interfere in any way with the main object of my journey. A great portion of my limited capital was, with the kind aid of a medical friend, invested in medicines which I had reason to believe would be useful; with the remainder I purchased those home comforts which I thought would be most difficult to obtain away from England.

I had scarcely set my foot on board the "Hollander," before I met a friend. The supercargo[4] was the brother of the Mr. S——, whose death in Jamaica the reader will not have forgotten, and he gave me a hearty welcome. I thought the meeting augured well, and when I told him my plans he gave me the most cheering encouragement. I

was glad, indeed, of any support, for, beyond all doubt, my project was a hazardous one.

So cheered at the outset, I watched without a pang the shores of England sink behind the smooth sea, and turned my gaze hopefully to the as yet landless horizon, beyond which lay that little peninsula to which the eyes and hearts of all England were so earnestly directed.

So, cheerily! the good ship ploughed its way eastward ho![5] for Turkey.

Endnotes

- Note 1: France and Britain declared war on Russia on March 27 and 28, 1854, respectively.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Chapter VII (not included here) provides details of Seacole's participation in gold-mining schemes in New Granada.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, handpicked, selected.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Matthew 25:36.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Arguing that Seacole is physically well-suited to the demands of nursing.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The head ("Secretary at War") of this ministry was at this time Sir Sidney Herbert (1810–1861).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Elizabeth Herbert (1822–1911), wife of Sir Sidney Herbert; she recruited nurses in London for Nightingale.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Male servants or footmen.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Steam-powered boat or ship with one or more propellers.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Table where officers of a regiment take their meals together.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Thomas Day, a distant relation of Seacole's husband, is introduced in Chapter VII (not included here); Seacole first met him in New Granada, where he was superintendent of a gold mine.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: A well-known British firm that produced shoe polish (then referred to as "blacking").Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Employee responsible for the cargo onboard a ship.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A play on the more familiar cry of "Westward ho!" (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* 3.1.134).Return to reference 5

Chapter IX

VOYAGE TO CONSTANTINOPLE—MALTA—GIBRALTAR—CONSTANTINOPLE, AND WHAT I THOUGHT OF IT—VISIT TO SCUTARI HOSPITAL—MISS NIGHTINGALE.

I am not going to risk the danger of wearying the reader with a long account of the voyage to Constantinople,[1] already worn threadbare by book-making tourists. It was a very interesting one, and, as I am a good sailor, I had not even the temporary horrors of sea-sickness to mar it. The weather, although cold, was fine, and the sea good-humouredly calm, and I enjoyed the voyage amazingly. And as day by day we drew nearer to the scene of action, my doubts of success grew less and less, until I had a conviction of the rightness of the step I had taken, which would have carried me buoyantly through any difficulties.

On the way, of course, I was called up from my berth at an unreasonable hour to gaze upon the Cape of St. Vincent, and expected to feel duly impressed when the long bay where Trafalgar's fight[2] was won came in view, with the white convent walls on the cliffs above bathed in the early sunlight. I never failed to take an almost childish interest in the signals which passed between the "Hollander" and the fleet of vessels whose sails whitened the track to and from the Crimea, trying to puzzle out the language these children of the ocean spoke in their hurried course, and wondering whether any, or what sufficiently important thing *could* happen which would warrant their stopping on their busy way.

We spent a short time at Gibraltar, and you may imagine that I was soon on shore making the best use of the few hours' reprieve granted to the "Hollander's" weary engines. I had an idea that I should do better alone, so I declined all offers of companionship, and selecting a brisk young fellow from the mob of cicerones[3] who offered their services, saw more of the art of fortification in an hour or so than I could understand in as many years. The pleasure was rather fatiguing, and I was not sorry to return to the market-place, where I stood curiously watching its strange and motley population.

While so engaged, I heard for the first time an exclamation which became familiar enough to me afterwards.

"Why, bless my soul, old fellow, if this is not our good old Mother Seacole!" I turned round, and saw two officers, whose features, set in a broad frame of Crimean beard, I had some difficulty in recognising. But I soon remembered that they were two of the 48th, who had been often in my house at Kingston. Glad were the kind-hearted fellows, and not a little surprised withal, to meet their old hostess in the market-place of Gibraltar, bound for the scene of action which they had left invalided; and it was not long before we were talking old times over some wine—Spanish, I suppose—but it was very nasty.

"And you are going to the front, old lady—you, of all people in the world?"

"Why not, my sons?—won't they be glad to have me there?"

"By Jove! yes, mother," answered one, an Irishman.[4] "It isn't many women—God bless them!—we've had to spoil us out there. But it's not the place even for you, who know what hardship is. You'll never get a roof to cover you at Balaclava, nor on the road either." So they rattled on, telling me of the difficulties that were in store for me. But they could not shake my resolution.

"Do you think I shall be of any use to you when I get there?"

"Surely."

"Then I'll go, were the place a hundred times worse than you describe it. Can't I rig up a hut with the packing-cases, and sleep, if need be, on straw, like Margery Daw?"[5]

So they laughed, and drank success to me, and to our next meeting; for, although they were going home invalided, the brave fellows' hearts were with their companions, for all the hardships they had passed through.

We stopped at Malta also, where, of course, I landed, and stared about me, and submitted to be robbed by the lazy Maltese with all a traveller's resignation. Here, also, I met friends—some medical officers who had known me in Kingston; and one of them, Dr. F——, lately arrived from Scutari, gave me, when he heard my plans, a

letter of introduction to Miss Nightingale, then hard at work, evoking order out of confusion, and bravely resisting the despotism of death, at the hospital of Scutari.

So on, past beautiful islands and shores, until we are steaming against a swift current, and an adverse wind, between two tower-crested promontories of rock, which they tell me stand in Europe and in Asia, and are connected with some pretty tale of love[6] in days long gone by. Ah! travel where a woman may, in the New World, or the Old, she meets this old, old tale everywhere. It is the one bond of sympathy which I have found existing in three quarters of the world alike. So on, until the cable rattles over the windlass, as the good ship's anchor plunges down fathoms deep into the blue waters of the Bosphorus[7]—her voyage ended.

I do not think that Constantinople impressed me so much as I had expected; and I thought its streets would match those of Navy Bay not unfairly. The caicques,[8] also, of which I had ample experience—for I spent six days here, wandering about Pera and Stamboul[9] in the daytime, and returning to the "Hollander" at nightfall—might be made more safe and commodious for stout ladies, even if the process interfered a little with their ornament. Time and trouble combined have left me with a well-filled-out, portly form—the envy of many an angular Yankee female—and, more than once, it was in no slight danger of becoming too intimately acquainted with the temperature of the Bosphorus. But I will do the Turkish boatmen the justice to say that they were as politely careful of my safety as their astonishment and regard for the well-being of their caicques (which they appear to love as an Arab does his horse, or an Esquimaux his dogs, and for the same reason perhaps) would admit. Somewhat surprised, also, seemed the cunning-eyed Greeks, who throng the streets of Pera, at the unprotected Creole woman, who took Constantinople so coolly (it would require something more to surprise her); while the grave English raised their eyebrows wonderingly, and the more vivacious French shrugged their pliant shoulders into the strangest contortions. I accepted it all as a compliment to a stout female tourist, neatly dressed in a red or

yellow dress, a plain shawl of some other colour, and a simple straw wide-awake,[1] with bright red streamers. I flatter myself that I woke up sundry sleepy-eyed Turks, who seemed to think that the great object of life was to avoid showing surprise at anything; while the Turkish women gathered around me, and jabbered about me, in the most flattering manner.

How I ever succeeded in getting Mr. Day's letters from the Post-office, Constantinople, puzzles me now; but I did—and I shall ever regard my success as one of the great triumphs of my life. Their contents were not very cheering. He gave a very dreary account of Balaclava and of camp life, and almost dissuaded me from continuing my journey; but his last letter ended by giving me instructions as to the purchases I had best make, if I still determined upon making the adventure; so I forgot all the rest, and busied myself in laying in the stores he recommended.

But I found time, before I left the "Hollander," to charter a crazy caicque, to carry me to Scutari, intending to present Dr. F——'s letter to Miss Nightingale.

It was afternoon when the boatmen set me down in safety at the landing-place of Scutari, and I walked up the slight ascent, to the great dull-looking hospital. Thinking of the many noble fellows who had been borne, or had painfully crept along this path, only to die within that dreary building, I felt rather dull; and directly I entered the hospital, and came upon the long wards of sufferers, lying there so quiet and still, a rush of tears came to my eyes, and blotted out the sight for a few minutes. But I soon felt at home, and looked about me with great interest. The men were, many of them, very quiet. Some of the convalescent formed themselves into little groups around one who read a newspaper; others had books in their hands, or by their side, where they had fallen when slumber overtook the readers, while hospital orderlies moved to and fro, and now and then the female nurses, in their quiet uniform, passed noiselessly on some mission of kindness.

I was fortunate enough to find an old acquaintance, who accompanied me through the wards, and rendered it unnecessary

for me to trouble the busy nurses. This was an old 97th man—a Sergeant T——, whom I had known in Kingston, and who was slowly recovering from an attack of dysentery, and making himself of use here until the doctors should let him go back and have another "shy at the Rooshians."[2] He is very glad to meet me, and tells me his history very socially, and takes me to the bedsides of some comrades, who had also known me at Up-Park Camp. My poor fellows! how their eyes glisten when they light upon an old friend's face in these Turkish barracks—put to so sad a use, three thousand miles from home. Here is one of them—"hurt in the trenches," says the Sergeant, with shaven bandaged head, and bright, restless, Irish eyes, who hallooes out, "Mother Seacole! Mother Seacole!" in such an excited tone of voice; and when he has shaken hands a score of times, falls back upon his pillow very wearily. But I sit by his side, and try to cheer him with talk about the future, when he shall grow well, and see home, and hear them all thank him for what he has been helping to do, so that he grows all right in a few minutes; but, hearing that I am on the way to the front, gets excited again; for, you see, illness and weakness make these strong men as children, not least in the patient unmurmuring resignation with which they suffer. I think my Irish friend had an indistinct idea of a "muddle" somewhere, which had kept him for weeks on salt meat and biscuit, until it gave him the "scurvy,"[3] for he is very anxious that I should take over plenty of vegetables, of every sort. "And, oh! mother!"—and it is strange to hear his almost plaintive tone as he urges this—"take them plenty of eggs, mother; we never saw eggs over there."

At some slight risk of giving offence, I cannot resist the temptation of lending a helping hand here and there—replacing a slipped bandage, or easing a stiff one. But I do not think any one was offended; and one doctor, who had with some surprise and, at first, alarm on his face, watched me replace a bandage, which was giving pain, said, very kindly, when I had finished, "Thank you, ma'am."

One thought never left my mind as I walked through the fearful miles of suffering in that great hospital. If it is so here, what must it not be at the scene of war—on the spot where the poor fellows are stricken down by pestilence or Russian bullets, and days and nights of agony must be passed before a woman's hand can dress their wounds. And I felt happy in the conviction that *I must* be useful three or four days nearer to their pressing wants than this.

It was growing late before I felt tired, or thought of leaving Scutari, and Dr. S——, another Jamaica friend, who had kindly borne me company for the last half-hour agreed with me that the caicque was not the safest conveyance by night on the Bosphorus, and recommended me to present my letter to Miss Nightingale, and perhaps a lodging for the night could be found for me. So, still under the Sergeant's patient guidance, we thread our way through passages and corridors, all used as sick-wards, until we reach the corner tower of the building, in which are the nurses' quarters.

I think Mrs. B——,[4] who saw me, felt more surprise than she could politely show (I never found women so quick to understand me as the men) when I handed her Dr. F——'s kind letter respecting me, and apologized for troubling Miss Nightingale. There is that in the Doctor's letter (he had been much at Scutari) which prevents my request being refused, and I am asked to wait until Miss Nightingale, whose every moment is valuable, can see me. Meanwhile Mrs. B. questions me very kindly, but with the same look of curiosity and surprise.

What object has Mrs. Seacole in coming out? This is the purport of her questions. And I say, frankly, to be of use somewhere; for other considerations I had not, until necessity forced them upon me. Willingly, had they accepted me, I would have worked for the wounded, in return for bread and water. I fancy Mrs. B—— thought that I sought for employment at Scutari, for she said, very kindly—

"Miss Nightingale has the entire management of our hospital staff, but I do not think that any vacancy—"

"Excuse me, ma'am," I interrupt her with, "but I am bound for the front in a few days;" and my questioner leaves me, more

surprised than ever. The room I waited in was used as a kitchen. Upon the stoves were cans of soup, broth, and arrow-root,[5] while nurses passed in and out with noiseless tread and subdued manner. I thought many of them had that strange expression of the eyes which those who have gazed long on scenes of woe or horror seldom lose.

In half an hour's time I am admitted to Miss Nightingale's presence. A slight figure, in the nurses' dress; with a pale, gentle, and withal firm face, resting lightly in the palm of one white hand, while the other supports the elbow—a position which gives to her countenance a keen inquiring expression, which is rather marked. Standing thus in repose, and yet keenly observant—the greatest sign of impatience at any time a slight, perhaps unwitting motion of the firmly planted right foot—was Florence Nightingale—that Englishwoman whose name shall never die, but sound like music on the lips of British men until the hour of doom.[6]

She has read Dr. F——'s letter, which lies on the table by her side, and asks, in her gentle but eminently practical and business-like way, "What do you want, Mrs. Seacole—anything that we can do for you? If it lies in my power, I shall be very happy."

So I tell her of my dread of the night journey by caicque, and the improbability of my finding the "Hollander" in the dark; and, with some diffidence, threw myself upon the hospitality of Scutari, offering to nurse the sick for the night. Now unfortunately, for many reasons, room even for one in Scutari Hospital was at that time no easy matter to find; but at last a bed was discovered to be unoccupied at the hospital washerwomen's quarters.

My experience of washerwomen, all the world over, is the same—that they are kind soft-hearted folks. Possibly the soap-suds they almost live in find their way into their hearts and tempers, and soften them. This Scutari washerwoman is no exception to the rule, and welcomes me most heartily. With her, also, are some invalid nurses; and after they have gone to bed, we spend some hours of the night talking over our adventures, and giving one another scraps of our respective biographies. I hadn't long retired to my couch

before I wished most heartily that we had continued our chat; for unbidden and most unwelcome companions took the washerwoman's place, and persisted not only in dividing my bed, but my plump person also. Upon my word, I believe the fleas are the only industrious creatures in all Turkey. Some of their relatives would seem to have migrated into Russia; for I found them in the Crimea equally prosperous and ubiquitous.

In the morning, a breakfast is sent to my mangled remains, and a kind message from Mrs. B——, having reference to how I spent the night. And, after an interview with some other medical men, whose acquaintance I had made in Jamaica, I shake hands with the soft-hearted washerwoman, up to her shoulders in soap-suds already, and start for the "Hollander."

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Endnotes

- Note 1: Former name of Istanbul, Turkey.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The battle of Trafalgar, in which the British navy defeated the combined forces of the French and Spanish navies, took place on October 21, 1805.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Guides offering sightseeing tours.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: To Roman Catholics in Britain and Ireland who were willing to swear an oath of loyalty to the crown, the Papists Act of 1778 granted limited civil rights, including the right to join the British Army. Around 40 percent of the British armed forces in the 1850s were Irish-born.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Alluding to a traditional English nursery rhyme, "See Saw, Margery Daw." In one version Margery "[s]old her bed and lay on the straw."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A Greek myth tells the story of lovers who lived on either side of the Hellespont, a stretch of water now known as the Dardanelle Straits. Every night Leander would swim across

to join Hero until one night he drowned; Hero then drowned herself.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: The strait of water that runs through Istanbul, separating Europe from Asia and connecting the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara. “Windlass”: a cranking device or winch used to raise a ship’s anchor.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Light rowboats.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Districts of Istanbul.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Hat with a low crown and a very wide brim.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, take a shot at the Russians.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Disease caused by vitamin C deficiency.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Probably Selina Bracebridge (1800–1874), who accompanied Nightingale to Istanbul and served as her assistant.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: An easily digestible starch from a tropical plant, typically used in hard biscuits.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Subsequently I saw much of Miss Nightingale, at Balaclava [*Seacole’s note*].Return to reference 6

From *Chapter XIII*

MY WORK IN THE CRIMEA

I hope the reader will give me credit for the assertion that I am about to make, viz., that I enter upon the particulars of this chapter with great reluctance; but I cannot omit them, for the simple reason that they strengthen my one and only claim to interest the public, viz., my services to the brave British army in the Crimea. But, fortunately, I can follow a course which will not only render it unnecessary for me to sound my own trumpet, but will be more satisfactory to the reader. I can put on record the written opinions of those who had ample means of judging and ascertaining how I fulfilled the great object which I had in view in leaving England for the Crimea; and before I do so, I must solicit my readers' attention to the position I held in the camp as doctress, nurse, and "mother."

I have never been long in any place before I have found my practical experience in the science of medicine useful. Even in London I have found it of service to others. And in the Crimea, where the doctors were so overworked, and sickness was so prevalent, I could not be long idle; for I never forgot that my intention in seeking the army was to help the kind-hearted doctors, to be useful to whom I have ever looked upon and still regard as so high a privilege.

But before very long I found myself surrounded with patients of my own, and this for two simple reasons. In the first place, the men (I am speaking of the "ranks" now) had a very serious objection to going into hospital for any but urgent reasons, and the regimental doctors were rather fond of sending them there; and, in the second place, they could and did get at my store sick-comforts and nourishing food, which the heads of the medical staff would sometimes find it difficult to procure. These reasons, with the additional one that I was very familiar with the diseases which they suffered most from, and successful in their treatment (I say this in

no spirit of vanity), were quite sufficient to account for the numbers who came daily to the British Hotel for medical treatment.

That the officers were glad of me as a doctress and nurse may be easily understood. When a poor fellow lay sickening in his cheerless hut and sent down to me, he knew very well that I should not ride up in answer to his message empty-handed. And although I did not hesitate to charge him with the value of the necessaries I took him, still he was thankful enough to be able to *purchase* them. When we lie ill at home surrounded with comfort, we never think of feeling any special gratitude for the sick-room delicacies which we accept as a consequence of our illness; but the poor officer lying ill and weary in his crazy hut, dependent for the merest necessaries of existence upon a clumsy, ignorant soldier-cook, who would almost prefer eating his meat raw to having the trouble of cooking it (our English soldiers are bad campaigners), often finds his greatest troubles in the want of those little delicacies with which a weak stomach must be humoured into retaining nourishment. How often have I felt sad at the sight of poor lads, who in England thought attending early parade a hardship, and felt harassed if their neckcloths set awry, or the natty little boots would not retain their polish, bearing, and bearing so nobly and bravely, trials and hardships to which the veteran campaigner frequently succumbed. Don't you think, reader, if you were lying, with parched lips and fading appetite, thousands of miles from mother, wife, or sister, loathing the rough food by your side, and thinking regretfully of that English home where nothing that could minister to your great need would be left untried—don't you think that you would welcome the familiar figure of the stout lady whose bony horse has just pulled up at the door of your hut, and whose panniers contain some cooling drink, a little broth, some homely cake, or a dish of jelly or blanc-mange[1]—don't you think, under such circumstances, that you would heartily agree with my friend *Punch's* remark:—

"That berry-brown face, with a kind heart's trace
Impressed on each wrinkle sly,

Was a sight to behold, through the snow-clouds rolled
Across that iron sky."[2]

I tell you, reader, I have seen many a bold fellow's eyes moisten at such a season, when a woman's voice and a woman's care have brought to their minds recollections of those happy English homes which some of them never saw again; but many did, who will remember their woman-comrade upon the bleak and barren heights before Sebastopol.

Then their calling me "mother" was not, I think, altogether unmeaning. I used to fancy that there was something homely in the word; and, reader, you cannot think how dear to them was the smallest thing that reminded them of home.

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In the 2nd vol. of Russell's "Letters from the Seat of War,"[3] p. 187, is the following entry:—

"In the hour of their illness these men (Army Works Corps), in common with many others, have found a kind and successful physician. Close to the railway, half-way between the Col de Balaclava[4] and Kadikoi, Mrs. Seacole, formerly of Kingston and of several other parts of the world, such as Panama and Chagres, has pitched her abode—an iron storehouse with wooden sheds and outlying tributaries—and here she doctors and cures all manner of men with extraordinary success. She is always in attendance near the battle-field to aid the wounded, and has earned many a poor fellow's blessings."

Yes! I cannot—referring to that time—conscientiously charge myself with doing less for the men who had only thanks to give me, than for the officers whose gratitude gave me the necessaries of life. I think I was ever ready to turn from the latter to help the former, humble as they might be; and they were grateful in their way, and as far as they could be. They would buy me apples and other fruit at Balaclava, and leave them at my store. One made me promise, when

I returned home, to send word to his Irish mother, who was to send me a cow in token of her gratitude for the help I had been to her son. I have a book filled with hundreds of the names of those who came to me for medicines and other aids; and never a train of sick or wounded men from the front passed the British Hotel but its hostess was awaiting them to offer comforts to the poor fellows, for whose suffering her heart bled.

Punch, who allowed my poor name to appear in the pages which had welcomed Miss Nightingale home—*Punch*, that whimsical mouthpiece of some of the noblest hearts that ever beat beneath black coats—shall last of all raise its voice, that never yet pleaded an unworthy cause, for the Mother Seacole that takes shame to herself for speaking thus of the poor part she bore of the trials and hardships endured on that distant shore, where Britain's best and bravest wrung hardly Sebastopol from the grasp of Britain's foe:—

"No store she set by the epaulette,
Be it worsted or gold lace;
For K. C. B. or plain private Smith,[5]
She had still one pleasant face.

"And not alone was her kindness shown
To the hale and hungry lot
Who drank her grog and ate her prog,
And paid their honest shot.[6]

"The sick and sorry can tell the story
Of her nursing and dosing deeds;
Regimental M.D. never worked as she,
In helping sick men's needs.

"Of such work, God knows, was as much as she chose
That dreary winter-tide,
When Death hung o'er the damp and pestilent camp,
And his scythe swung far and wide.

"She gave her aid to all who prayed,
To hungry and sick and cold;
Open hand and heart, alike ready to part
Kind words and acts, and gold.

"And—be the right man in the right place who can—
The right woman was Dame Seacole."

Reader, now that we have come to the end of this chapter, I can say what I have been all anxiety to tell you from its beginning. Please look back to Chapter VIII., and see how hard the right woman had to struggle to convey herself to the right place.

***

Endnotes

- Note 1: A sweet dessert made from milk and flavored corn flour. "Homely": familiar, simple (British).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A quatrain from "A Stir for Seacole," a poem that appeared on December 6, 1856, in the popular British periodical *Punch*. Additional lines are quoted at the end of the chapter.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The Irish journalist William Howard Russell (1827–1907), considered the first modern war correspondent, covered the Crimean conflict for the London *Times*; his reports were also published in book form in 1856.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Balaclava Pass (French).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath, a high honor awarded by the British monarchy for exceptional service.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: To pay your shot or shout is to pay your bill (British slang). "Grog": spirits, usually rum, mixed with water. "Prog": food (British slang, archaic).Return to reference 6

Conclusion

I did not return to England by the most direct route, but took the opportunity of seeing more of men and manners in yet other lands. Arrived in England at last, we set to work bravely at Aldershott to retrieve our fallen fortunes,[1] and stem off the ruin originated in the Crimea, but all in vain; and at last defeated by fortune, but not I think disgraced, we were obliged to capitulate on very honourable conditions. In plain truth, the old Crimean firm of Seacole and Day was dissolved finally, and its partners had to recommence the world anew. And so ended *our* campaign. One of us started only the other day for the Antipodes, while the other is ready to take any journey to any place where a stout heart and two experienced hands may be of use.

Perhaps it would be right if I were to express more shame and annoyance than I really feel at the pecuniarily disastrous issue of my Crimean adventures, but I cannot—I really cannot. When I would try and feel ashamed of myself for being poor and helpless, I only experience a glow of pride at the other and more pleasing events of my career; when I think of the few whom I failed to pay in full (and so far from blaming me some of them are now my firmest friends), I cannot help remembering also the many who profess themselves indebted to me.

Let me, in as few words as possible, state the results of my Crimean campaign. To be sure, I returned from it shaken in health. I came home wounded, as many others did. Few constitutions, indeed, were the better for those winters before Sebastopol, and I was too hard worked not to feel their effects; for a little labour fatigues me now—I cannot watch by sick-beds as I could—a week's want of rest quite knocks me up now. Then I returned bankrupt in fortune. Whereas others in my position may have come back to England rich and prosperous, I found myself poor—beggared. So few words can tell what I have lost.

But what have I gained? I should need a volume to describe that fairly; so much is it, and so cheaply purchased by suffering ten times

worse than what I have experienced. I have more than once heard people say that they would gladly suffer illness to enjoy the delights of convalescence, and so, by enduring a few days' pain, gain the tender love of relatives and sympathy of friends. And on this principle I rejoice in the trials which have borne me such pleasures as those I now enjoy, for wherever I go I am sure to meet some smiling face; every step I take in the crowded London streets may bring me in contact with some friend, forgotten by me, perhaps, but who soon reminds me of our old life before Sebastopol; it seems very long ago now, when I was of use to him and he to me.

Where, indeed, do I not find friends. In omnibuses, in river steamboats, in places of public amusement, in quiet streets and courts, where taking short cuts I lose my way oft-times, spring up old familiar faces to remind me of the months spent on Spring Hill. The sentries at Whitehall relax from the discharge of their important duty of guarding nothing to give me a smile of recognition; the very newspaper offices look friendly as I pass them by; busy Printing-house Yard[2] puts on a cheering smile, and the *Punch* office in Fleet Street sometimes laughs outright. Now, would all this have happened if I had returned to England a rich woman? Surely not.

A few words more ere I bring these egotistical remarks to a close. It is naturally with feelings of pride and pleasure that I allude to the committee recently organized to aid me;[3] and if I indulge in the vanity of placing their names before my readers, it is simply because every one of the following noblemen and gentlemen knew me in the Crimea, and by consenting to assist me now record publicly their opinion of my services there. And yet I may reasonably on other grounds be proud of the fact, that it has been stated publicly that my present embarrassments originated in my charities and incessant labours among the army, by

Major-General Lord Rokeby, K.C.B.
H.S.H. Prince Edward of Saxe Weimar, C.B.
His Grace the Duke of Wellington.

His Grace the Duke of Newcastle.
The Right Hon. Lord Ward.
General Sir John Burgoyne, K.C.B.
Major-General Sir Richard Airey, K.C.B.
Rear-Admiral Sir Stephen Lushington, K.C.B.
Colonel M'Murdo, C.B.
Colonel Chapman, C.B.
Lieutenant-Colonel Ridley, C.B.
Major the Hon. F. Keane.
W. H. Russell, Esq. (*Times* Correspondent).
W. T. Doyne, Esq.

1858

Endnotes

- Note 1: Aldershot, a town in Hampshire in southern England, known as the "Home of the British Army" after a permanent training camp was established there in 1854; Seacole's plan to set up a provision store here was not carried out.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Seacole refers to Printing House Square, the home of the London *Times* newspaper.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The fund, one of several in the years to come, was initiated in a letter to the *Times* from army officer Hussey Fane Keane (1822–1895).Return to reference 3

JOHN STUART MILL
1806–1873

A knowledge of the writings of J. S. Mill is essential to any understanding of the literature of the nineteenth century—as well as to any understanding of the American political landscape in the twentieth and twenty-first. He is one of the leading figures in the intellectual history of his century, a thinker whose honest grappling with the political and religious problems of his age had a profound influence on both his contemporaries and the thinkers who followed him. During his lifetime, his reputation was established by his *System of Logic* (1843), and then confirmed by his many writings on literature, society, and politics. Throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, *On Liberty* (1859) has been regarded as a major touchstone for theories of liberalism.

Mill was educated at home in London under the direction of his father, James Mill (1773–1836). James Mill believed that ordinary schooling fails to develop our intellectual capacities early enough, and he demonstrated his point by the extraordinary results he achieved in training his son. As a child, John Stuart Mill read Greek and Latin; and as a boy he could carry on intelligent discussions of problems in mathematics, philosophy, and economics. By the time he was fourteen, as he reports in his *Autobiography* (1873), his intensive education enabled him to start his career "with an advantage of a quarter of a century" over his contemporaries.

Mill began as a disciple of the Utilitarian theories of his father and of Jeremy Bentham (1748–132) but gradually became dissatisfied with the narrowness of their conception of human motives. Working in the empiricist tradition, Utilitarians attempted to show that most traditional views of politics, ethics, and psychology are based on nothing more than long-standing superstition and habit. Most famously, they challenged the idea that human beings function according to God-given intuitions and feelings, arguing that the mind is instead the product of mechanical associations. According to the Utilitarians, then, individuals are ultimately motivated not by an innate sense of right and wrong but instead by the simple desire to find pleasure and avoid pain. Politically, the Utilitarians thus lobbied for measures that would bring the greatest pleasure (or happiness) to the greatest number. These reforms included the expansion of the franchise (that is, allowing more people to vote), the creation of factory laws and other worker protections, consumer protections, the expansion of educational opportunities, legal reform, prison reform, and sanitary reform. Though Mill believed in the value of such efforts —and during his brief time in Parliament attempted to promote them —he also came to appreciate the values of such writers as Coleridge and Carlyle who rejected Utilitarianism's attempts to establish systemic ways to guarantee happiness in favor of an emphasis on spirituality, emotion, and ethics. Whenever possible, he sought to incorporate some of these values into the Utilitarian system. In part this sympathy was gained by the lesson he learned as a result of experiencing a nervous breakdown during his early twenties. This painful event, described in a chapter of his *Autobiography,* taught him that the lack of concern for people's affections and emotions characteristic of the Utilitarian system of thought (and typified by his own education) was a fatal flaw in that system. He offers tribute to the therapeutic value of art because of its effect on human emotions, both in his *Autobiography* (1873) and in his early essay "What Is Poetry?" (1833).

Mill's most influential work, *On Liberty* (1859), is not a traditional liberal attack on tyrannical kings or dictators, but instead addresses

the negative effects of tyrannical majorities. Mill foresaw that in democracies such as the United States the pressure toward conformity might crush all individuals to the level of what he called a "collective mediocrity." Throughout all his writings, even in his discussions of the advantages of socialism, Mill is concerned with demonstrating that the individual is more important than institutions such as church or state. *On Liberty* provides a characteristic example of the process of his reasoning, but it also demonstrates that, when the theme of individualism is central, Mill's logic is charged with eloquence.

Mill's commitment to the value of individual self-determination was profound, but it was not without significant limitations. Although he wrote little about his experiences working in the office of the East India Company, he served the EIC for thirty-five years and played a significant role in its governance of India. More information about the EIC is available elsewhere in this volume (p. 12, above), but it is important to note that it was responsible for governing the subcontinent without significant input from the people so governed. This is a state of affairs that Mill implicitly defends in the opening chapter of *On Liberty*. Here he writes that the doctrine of personal liberty that he expounds

> is meant to apply only to human beings in the maturity of their faculties. We are not speaking of children, or of young persons below the age which the law may fix as that of manhood or womanhood. Those who are still in a state to require being taken care of by others, must be protected against their own actions as well as against external injury. For the same reason, we may leave out of consideration those backward states of society in which the race itself may be considered as in its nonage.

This notion that certain "backward states of society"—and the people who inhabit them—are not (yet) competent to determine their own interests constituted an important and quite common defense of empire. Despite this commitment to "humanitarian" or

"philanthropic" empire, Mill was also a loud and clear voice against slavery in the United States, and he actively rejected at least some of the violent tactics used by the British to maintain their imperial holdings—as evidenced, for example, in the role he played as chair of the Jamaica Committee, which was formed to prosecute Governor Edward John Eyre for his violent suppression of the Morant Bay uprising in Jamaica.

Mill's emotional life was broadened by his love for Harriet Taylor, a married woman who shared his intellectual interests and, after the death of her husband, eventually became his wife. Little that Taylor wrote was published under her own name during her life, but her contribution to Mill's work should not be underestimated; Mill later described her as "the inspirer, and in part the author, of all that is best in my writings." They shared a commitment to the cause of female emancipation, one of several movements to which Mill was dedicated. Throughout human history, as he saw it, the role of a husband has always been legally that of a tyrant, and the object of his far-seeing book *The Subjection of Women* (1869) was to change law and public opinion so that half the human race might be regarded as equals. The subjection of women was, however, only one aspect of the tyranny against which he fought.

Mill died three days before his sixty-seventh birthday while at his home in France. His body was buried next to his wife's in Avignon.

What Is Poetry?

It has often been asked, What Is Poetry? And many and various are the answers which have been returned. The vulgarest of all—one with which no person possessed of the faculties to which poetry addresses itself can ever have been satisfied—is that which confounds poetry with metrical composition; yet to this wretched mockery of a definition many have been led back by the failure of all their attempts to find any other that would distinguish what they have been accustomed to call poetry from much which they have known only under other names.

That, however, the word "poetry" imports something quite peculiar in its nature; something which may exist in what is called prose as well as in verse; something which does not even require the instrument of words, but can speak through the other audible symbols called musical sounds, and even through the visible ones which are the language of sculpture, painting, and architecture—all this, we believe, is and must be felt, though perhaps indistinctly, by all upon whom poetry in any of its shapes produces any impression beyond that of tickling the ear. The distinction between poetry and what is not poetry, whether explained or not, is felt to be fundamental; and, where every one feels a difference, a difference there must be. All other appearances may be fallacious; but the appearance of a difference is a real difference. Appearances too, like other things, must have a cause; and that which can cause anything, even an illusion, must be a reality. And hence, while a half-philosophy disdains the classifications and distinctions indicated by popular language, philosophy carried to its highest point frames new ones, but rarely sets aside the old, content with correcting and regularizing them. It cuts fresh channels for thought, but does not fill up such as it finds ready-made: it traces, on the contrary, more deeply, broadly, and distinctly, those into which the current has spontaneously flowed.

Let us then attempt, in the way of modest inquiry, not to coerce and confine Nature within the bounds of an arbitrary definition, but rather to find the boundaries which she herself has set, and erect a barrier round them; not calling mankind to account for having misapplied the word "poetry," but attempting to clear up the conception which they already attach to it, and to bring forward as a distinct principle that which, as a vague feeling, has really guided them in their employment of the term.

The object of poetry is confessedly to act upon the emotions; and therein is poetry sufficiently distinguished from what Wordsworth affirms to be its logical opposite;[1] namely, not prose but matter of fact, or science. The one addresses itself to the belief; the other, to the feelings. The one does its work by convincing or persuading; the other, by moving. The one acts by presenting a proposition to the understanding; the other, by offering interesting objects of contemplation to the sensibilities.

This, however, leaves us very far from a definition of poetry. This distinguishes it from one thing; but we are bound to distinguish it from everything. To bring thoughts or images before the mind, for the purpose of acting upon the emotions, does not belong to poetry alone. It is equally the province (for example) of the novelist: and yet the faculty of the poet and that of the novelist are as distinct as any other two faculties; as the faculties of the novelist and of the orator, or of the poet and the metaphysician. The two characters may be united, as characters the most disparate may; but they have no natural connection.

Many of the greatest poems are in the form of fictitious narratives; and, in almost all good serious fictions, there is true poetry. But there is a radical distinction between the interest felt in a story as such, and the interest excited by poetry; for the one is derived from incident, the other from the representation of feeling. In one, the source of the emotion excited is the exhibition of a state or states of human sensibility; in the other, of a series of states of mere outward circumstances. Now, all minds are capable of being affected more or less by representations of the latter kind, and all, or

almost all, by those of the former; yet the two sources of interest correspond to two distinct and (as respects their greatest development) mutually exclusive characters of mind.

At what age is the passion for a story, for almost any kind of story, merely as a story, the most intense? In childhood. But that also is the age at which poetry, even of the simplest description, is least relished and least understood; because the feelings with which it is especially conversant are yet undeveloped, and, not having been even in the slightest degree experienced, cannot be sympathized with. In what stage of the progress of society, again, is storytelling most valued, and the storyteller in greatest request and honor? In a rude state like that of the Tartars and Arabs at this day, and of almost all nations in the earliest ages. But, in this state of society, there is little poetry except ballads, which are mostly narrative—that is, essentially stories—and derive their principal interest from the incidents. Considered as poetry, they are of the lowest and most elementary kind: the feelings depicted, or rather indicated, are the simplest our nature has; such joys and griefs as the immediate pressure of some outward event excites in rude minds, which live wholly immersed in outward things, and have never, either from choice or a force they could not resist, turned themselves to the contemplation of the world within. Passing now from childhood, and from the childhood of society, to the grown-up men and women of this most grown-up and unchildlike age, the minds and hearts of greatest depth and elevation are commonly those which take greatest delight in poetry: the shallowest and emptiest, on the contrary, are, at all events, not those least addicted to novel-reading. This accords, too, with all analogous experience of human nature. The sort of persons whom not merely in books, but in their lives, we find perpetually engaged in hunting for excitement from without, are invariably those who do not possess, either in the vigor of their intellectual powers or in the depth of their sensibilities, that which would enable them to find ample excitement nearer home. The most idle and frivolous persons take a natural delight in fictitious narrative: the excitement it affords is of the kind which comes from

without. Such persons are rarely lovers of poetry, though they may fancy themselves so because they relish novels in verse. But poetry, which is the delineation of the deeper and more secret workings of human emotion, is interesting only to those to whom it recalls what they have felt, or whose imagination it stirs up to conceive what they could feel, or what they might have been able to feel, had their outward circumstances been different.

Poetry, when it is really such, is truth; and fiction also, if it is good for anything, is truth: but they are different truths. The truth of poetry is to paint the human soul truly: the truth of fiction is to give a true picture of life. The two kinds of knowledge are different, and come by different ways, come mostly to different persons. Great poets are often proverbially ignorant of life. What they know has come by observation of themselves: they have found within them one highly delicate and sensitive specimen of human nature, on which the laws of emotion are written in large characters, such as can be read off without much study. Other knowledge of mankind, such as comes to men of the world by outward experience, is not indispensable to them as poets: but, to the novelist, such knowledge is all in all; he has to describe outward things, not the inward man; actions and events, not feelings; and it will not do for him to be numbered among those, who, as Madame Roland said of Brissot,[2] know man, but not *men.*

All this is no bar to the possibility of combining both elements, poetry and narrative or incident, in the same work, and calling it either a novel or a poem; but so may red and white combine on the same human features or on the same canvas. There is one order of composition which requires the union of poetry and incident, each in its highest kind—the dramatic. Even there, the two elements are perfectly distinguishable, and may exist of unequal quality and in the most various proportion. The incidents of a dramatic poem may be scanty and ineffective, though the delineation of passion and character may be of the highest order, as in Goethe's admirable "Torquato Tasso";[3] or, again, the story as a mere story may be well got up for effect, as is the case with some of the most trashy

productions of the Minerva Press:[4] it may even be, what those are not, a coherent and probable series of events, though there be scarcely a feeling exhibited which is not represented falsely, or in a manner absolutely commonplace. The combination of the two excellences is what renders Shakespeare so generally acceptable, each sort of readers finding in him what is suitable to their faculties. To the many, he is great as a storyteller; to the few, as a poet.

In limiting poetry to the delineation of states of feeling, and denying the name where nothing is delineated but outward objects, we may be thought to have done what we promised to avoid—to have not found, but made, a definition in opposition to the usage of language, since it is established by common consent that there is a poetry called descriptive. We deny the charge. Description is not poetry because there is descriptive poetry, no more than science is poetry because there is such a thing as a didactic poem. But an object which admits of being described, or a truth which may fill a place in a scientific treatise, may also furnish an occasion for the generation of poetry, which we thereupon choose to call descriptive or didactic. The poetry is not in the object itself, nor in the scientific truth itself, but in the state of mind in which the one and the other may be contemplated. The mere delineation of the dimensions and colors of external objects is not poetry, no more than a geometrical ground-plan of St. Peter's or Westminster Abbey is painting. Descriptive poetry consists, no doubt, in description, but in description of things as they appear, not as they are; and it paints them, not in their bare and natural lineaments, but seen through the medium and arrayed in the colors of the imagination set in action by the feelings. If a poet describes a lion, he does not describe him as a naturalist would, nor even as a traveler would, who was intent upon stating the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. He describes him by imagery, that is, by suggesting the most striking likenesses and contrasts which might occur to a mind contemplating a lion, in the state of awe, wonder, or terror, which the spectacle naturally excites, or is, on the occasion, supposed to excite. Now, this is describing the lion professedly, but the state of excitement of

the spectator really. The lion may be described falsely or with exaggeration and the poetry be all the better: but, if the human emotion be not painted with scrupulous truth, the poetry is bad poetry, i.e., is not poetry at all, but a failure.

Thus far, our progress towards a clear view of the essentials of poetry has brought us very close to the last two attempts at a definition of poetry which we happen to have seen in print, both of them by poets, and men of genius. The one is by Ebenezer Elliott, the author of "Corn-law Rhymes," and other poems of still greater merit. "Poetry," says he, "is impassioned truth."[5] The other is by a writer in "Blackwood's Magazine," and comes, we think, still nearer the mark. He defines poetry, "man's thoughts tinged by his feelings." There is in either definition a near approximation to what we are in search of. Every truth which a human being can enunciate, every thought, even every outward impression, which can enter into his consciousness, may become poetry, when shown through any impassioned medium; when invested with the coloring of joy, or grief, or pity, or affection, or admiration, or reverence, or awe, or even hatred or terror; and, unless so colored, nothing, be it as interesting as it may, is poetry. But both these definitions fail to discriminate between poetry and eloquence. Eloquence, as well as poetry, is impassioned truth; eloquence, as well as poetry, is thoughts colored by the feelings. Yet common apprehension and philosophic criticism alike recognize a distinction between the two: there is much that everyone would call eloquence, which no one would think of classing as poetry. A question will sometimes arise, whether some particular author is a poet; and those who maintain the negative commonly allow, that, though not a poet, he is a highly eloquent writer. The distinction between poetry and eloquence appears to us to be equally fundamental with the distinction between poetry and narrative, or between poetry and description, while it is still farther from having been satisfactorily cleared up than either of the others.

Poetry and eloquence are both alike the expression or utterance of feeling: but, if we may be excused the antithesis, we should say

that eloquence is *heard;* poetry is *over*heard. Eloquence supposes an audience. The peculiarity of poetry appears to us to lie in the poet's utter unconsciousness of a listener. Poetry is feeling confessing itself to itself in moments of solitude, and embodying itself in symbols which are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which it exists in the poet's mind. Eloquence is feeling pouring itself out to other minds, courting their sympathy, or endeavoring to influence their belief, or move them to passion or to action.

All poetry is of the nature of soliloquy. It may be said that poetry which is printed on hot-pressed paper, and sold at a bookseller's shop, is a soliloquy in full dress and on the stage. It is so; but there is nothing absurd in the idea of such a mode of soliloquizing. What we have said to ourselves we may tell to others afterwards; what we have said or done in solitude we may voluntarily reproduce when we know that other eyes are upon us. But no trace of consciousness that any eyes are upon us must be visible in the work itself. The actor knows that there is an audience present: but, if he act as though he knew it, he acts ill. A poet may write poetry, not only with the intention of printing it, but for the express purpose of being paid for it. That it should *be* poetry, being written under such influences, is less probable, not, however, impossible; but no otherwise possible than if he can succeed in excluding from his work every vestige of such lookings-forth into the outward and every-day world, and can express his emotions exactly as he has felt them in solitude, or as he is conscious that he should feel them, though they were to remain for ever unuttered, or (at the lowest) as he knows that others feel them in similar circumstances of solitude. But when he turns round, and addresses himself to another person; when the act of utterance is not itself the end, but a means to an end—viz., by the feelings he himself expresses, to work upon the feelings, or upon the belief or the will of another; when the expression of his emotions, or of his thoughts tinged by his emotions, is tinged also by that purpose, by that desire of making an impression upon another mind—then it ceases to be poetry, and becomes eloquence.

Poetry, accordingly, is the natural fruit of solitude and meditation; eloquence, of intercourse with the world. The persons who have most feeling of their own, if intellectual culture has given them a language in which to express it, have the highest faculty of poetry: those who best understand the feelings of others are the most eloquent. The persons and the nations who commonly excel in poetry are those whose character and tastes render them least dependent upon the applause or sympathy or concurrence of the world in general. Those to whom that applause, that sympathy, that concurrence, are most necessary, generally excel most in eloquence. And hence, perhaps, the French, who are the least poetical of all great and intellectual nations, are among the most eloquent; the French also being the most sociable, the vainest, and the least self-dependent.

If the above be, as we believe, the true theory of the distinction commonly admitted between eloquence and poetry, or even though it be not so, yet if, as we cannot doubt, the distinction above stated be a real bona fide distinction, it will be found to hold, not merely in the language of words, but in all other language, and to intersect the whole domain of art.

Take, for example, music. We shall find in that art, so peculiarly the expression of passion, two perfectly distinct styles—one of which may be called the poetry, the other the oratory, of music. This difference, being seized, would put an end to much musical sectarianism. There has been much contention whether the music of the modern Italian school, that of Rossini,[6] and his successors, be impassioned or not. Without doubt, the passion it expresses is not the musing, meditative tenderness or pathos or grief of Mozart or Beethoven; yet it is passion, but garrulous passion, the passion which pours itself into other ears, and therein the better calculated for dramatic effect, having a natural adaptation for dialogue. Mozart also is great in musical oratory; but his most touching compositions are in the opposite style, that of soliloquy. Who can imagine "Dove sono"[7] *heard*? We imagine it *over*heard.

Purely pathetic music commonly partakes of soliloquy. The soul is absorbed in its distress and, though there may be bystanders, it is not thinking of them. When the mind is looking within, and not without, its state does not often or rapidly vary; and hence the even, uninterrupted flow, approaching almost to monotony, which a good reader or a good singer will give to words or music of a pensive or melancholy cast. But grief, taking the form of a prayer or of a complaint, becomes oratorical: no longer low and even and subdued, it assumes a more emphatic rhythm, a more rapidly returning accent; instead of a few slow, equal notes, following one after another at regular intervals, it crowds note upon note, and often assumes a hurry and bustle like joy. Those who are familiar with some of the best of Rossini's serious compositions, such as the air "Tu che i miseri conforti,"[8] in the opera of "Tancredi," or the duet "Ebben per mia memoria,"[9] in "La Gazza Ladra," will at once understand and feel our meaning. Both are highly tragic and passionate: the passion of both is that of oratory, not poetry. The like may be said of that most moving invocation in Beethoven's "Fidelio,"

"Komm, Hoffnung, lass das letzte Stern
Der Müde nicht erbleichen"—[1]

in which Madame Schröder Devrient exhibited such consummate powers of pathetic expression. How different from Winter's beautiful "Paga fui,"[2] the very soul of melancholy exhaling itself in solitude! fuller of meaning, and therefore more profoundly poetical, than the words for which it was composed; for it seems to express, not simple melancholy, but the melancholy of remorse.

If from vocal music we now pass to instrumental, we may have a specimen of musical oratory in any fine military symphony or march; while the poetry of music seems to have attained its consummation in Beethoven's "Overture to Egmont," so wonderful in its mixed expression of grandeur and melancholy.

In the arts which speak to the eye, the same distinctions will be found to hold, not only between poetry and oratory, but between poetry, oratory, narrative, and simple imitation or description.

Pure description is exemplified in a mere portrait or a mere landscape, productions of art, it is true, but of the mechanical rather than of the fine arts; being works of simple imitation, not creation. We say, a mere portrait or a mere landscape; because it is possible for a portrait or a landscape, without ceasing to be such, to be also a picture, like Turner's landscapes, and the great portraits by Titian or Vandyke.[3]

Whatever in painting or sculpture expresses human feeling—or character, which is only a certain state of feeling grown habitual—may be called, according to circumstances, the poetry or the eloquence of the painter's or the sculptor's art: the poetry, if the feeling declares itself by such signs as escape from us when we are unconscious of being seen; the oratory, if the signs are those we use for the purpose of voluntary communication.

The narrative style answers to what is called historical painting, which it is the fashion among connoisseurs to treat as the climax of the pictorial art. That it is the most difficult branch of the art, we do not doubt, because, in its perfection, it includes the perfection of all the other branches; as, in like manner, an epic poem, though, in so far as it is epic (i.e., narrative), it is not poetry at all, is yet esteemed the greatest effort of poetic genius, because there is no kind whatever of poetry which may not appropriately find a place in it. But an historical picture as such, that is, as the representation of an incident, must necessarily, as it seems to us, be poor and ineffective. The narrative powers of painting are extremely limited. Scarcely any picture, scarcely even any series of pictures, tells its own story without the aid of an interpreter. But it is the single figures, which, to us, are the great charm even of an historical picture. It is in these that the power of the art is really seen. In the attempt to narrate, visible and permanent signs are too far behind the fugitive audible ones, which follow so fast one after another; while the faces and figures in a narrative picture, even though they be Titian's, stand

still. Who would not prefer one "Virgin and Child" of Raphael to all the pictures which Rubens,[4] with his fat, frouzy Dutch Venuses, ever painted?—though Rubens, besides excelling almost everyone in his mastery over the mechanical parts of his art, often shows real genius in *grouping* his figures, the peculiar problem of historical painting. But then, who, except a mere student of drawing and coloring, ever cared to look twice at any of the figures themselves? The power of painting lies in poetry, of which Rubens had not the slightest tincture, not in narrative, wherein he might have excelled.

The single figures, however, in an historical picture, are rather the eloquence of painting than the poetry. They mostly (unless they are quite out of place in the picture) express the feelings of one person as modified by the presence of others. Accordingly, the minds whose bent leads them rather to eloquence than to poetry rush to historical painting. The French painters, for instance, seldom attempt, because they could make nothing of, single heads, like those glorious ones of the Italian masters with which they might feed themselves day after day in their own Louvre.[5] They must all be historical; and they are, almost to a man, attitudinizers. If we wished to give any young artist the most impressive warning our imagination could devise against that kind of vice in the pictorial which corresponds to rant in the histrionic art, we would advise him to walk once up and once down the gallery of the Luxembourg.[6] Every figure in French painting or statuary seems to be showing itself off before spectators. They are not poetical, but in the worst style of corrupted eloquence.

1833, 1859

Endnotes

- Note 1: In his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Jacques-Pierre Brissot (1754–1793), a leading reformer during the French Revolution, is characterized in the *Mémoires*

of Jeanne-Manon Roland (1754–1793).Return to reference 2

- Note 3: A play (1790) based on the life of this 16th-century Italian poet.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: An early 19th-century publishing house that fostered the production of sentimental novels.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: In the Preface to *Corn-Law Rhymes* (1828), by Elliott (1781–1849).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Gioacchino Rossini (1792–1868), composer of operas.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Where are fled [the lovely moments?] (Italian); soprano aria from act 3 of *The Marriage of Figaro* (1786), by the Austrian composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: You, who give comfort to the wretched (Italian); soprano aria from Rossini's *Tancredi* (1813).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Indeed according to my memory (Italian); soprano aria from Rossini's *La Gazza Ladra* (1817).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Come, Hope, let not the weary person's last star fade out (German); aria from *Fidelio* (1805), by the German composer Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827). Mill seems to be quoting from memory. The passage should read: "Komm, Hoffnung, lass den letzten Stern / Der Müden nicht erbleichen."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: I have been contented (Italian); aria from the once-popular opera *Il Ratto di Proserpina,* by Peter Winter (1754–1825), first performed in London in 1804.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Sir Anthony Van Dyck (1599–1641), Flemish painter who produced more than five hundred portraits. J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851), British landscape painter. Titian (Tiziano Vicelli, ca. 1488–1576), master painter of the Venetian school.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), Flemish painter (and Van Dyck's teacher). Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio, 1483–1520), Italian painter of the high Renaissance.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: A palace in Paris, opened as a public museum in 1793. The Italian Renaissance paintings originally owned by Francis I are the core of its collection.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A palace in Paris, where paintings of scenes from French history were exhibited.Return to reference 6

From On Liberty

From *Chapter 1. Introductory*

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The object of this Essay is to assert one very simple principle, as entitled to govern absolutely the dealings of society with the individual in the way of compulsion and control, whether the means used be physical force in the form of legal penalties, or the moral coercion of public opinion. That principle is, that the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant. He cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because, in the opinions of others, to do so would be wise, or even right. These are good reasons for remonstrating with him, or reasoning with him, or persuading him, or entreating him, but not for compelling him, or visiting him with any evil in case he do otherwise. To justify that, the conduct from which it is desired to deter him, must be calculated to produce evil to some one else. The only part of the conduct of any one, for which he is amenable to society, is that which concerns others. In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute. Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.

It is, perhaps, hardly necessary to say that this doctrine is meant to apply only to human beings in the maturity of their faculties. We are not speaking of children, or of young persons below the age which the law may fix as that of manhood or womanhood. Those who are still in a state to require being taken care of by others, must be protected against their own actions as well as against external injury. For the same reason, we may leave out of consideration those backward states of society in which the race itself may be considered as in its nonage. The early difficulties in the way of spontaneous

progress are so great, that there is seldom any choice of means for overcoming them; and a ruler full of the spirit of improvement is warranted in the use of any expedients that will attain an end, perhaps otherwise unattainable. Despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end. Liberty, as a principle, has no application to any state of things anterior to the time when mankind have become capable of being improved by free and equal discussion. Until then, there is nothing for them but implicit obedience to an Akbar or a Charlemagne,[1] if they are so fortunate as to find one. But as soon as mankind have attained the capacity of being guided to their own improvement by conviction or persuasion (a period long since reached in all nations with whom we need here concern ourselves), compulsion, either in the direct form or in that of pains and penalties for non-compliance, is no longer admissible as a means to their own good, and justifiable only for the security of others.

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But there is a sphere of action in which society, as distinguished from the individual, has, if any, only an indirect interest; comprehending all that portion of a person's life and conduct which affects only himself, or if it also affects others, only with their free, voluntary, and undeceived consent and participation. When I say only himself, I mean directly, and in the first instance: for whatever affects himself, may affect others *through* himself; and the objection which may be grounded on this contingency, will receive consideration in the sequel. This, then, is the appropriate region of human liberty. It comprises, first, the inward domain of consciousness; demanding liberty of conscience, in the most comprehensive sense; liberty of thought and feeling; absolute freedom of opinion and sentiment on all subjects, practical or speculative, scientific, moral, or theological. The liberty of expressing and publishing opinions may seem to fall under a different principle,

since it belongs to that part of the conduct of an individual which concerns other people; but, being almost of as much importance as the liberty of thought itself, and resting in great part on the same reasons, is practically inseparable from it. Secondly, the principle requires liberty of tastes and pursuits; of framing the plan of our life to suit our own character; of doing as we like, subject to such consequences as may follow: without impediment from our fellow-creatures, so long as what we do does not harm them, even though they should think our conduct foolish, perverse, or wrong. Thirdly, from this liberty of each individual, follows the liberty, within the same limits, of combination among individuals;[2] freedom to unite, for any purpose not involving harm to others: the persons combining being supposed to be of full age, and not forced or deceived.

No society in which these liberties are not, on the whole, respected, is free, whatever may be its form of government; and none is completely free in which they do not exist absolute and unqualified. The only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it. Each is the proper guardian of his own health, whether bodily, or mental and spiritual. Mankind are greater gainers by suffering each other to live as seems good to themselves, than by compelling each to live as seems good to the rest.

Though this doctrine is anything but new, and, to some persons, may have the air of a truism, there is no doctrine which stands more directly opposed to the general tendency of existing opinion and practice. Society has expended fully as much effort in the attempt (according to its lights) to compel people to conform to its notions of personal, as of social excellence. The ancient commonwealths thought themselves entitled to practise, and the ancient philosophers countenanced, the regulation of every part of private conduct by public authority, on the ground that the State had a deep interest in the whole bodily and mental discipline of every one of its citizens; a mode of thinking which may have been admissible in small republics surrounded by powerful enemies, in constant peril of

being subverted by foreign attack or internal commotion, and to which even a short interval of relaxed energy and self-command might so easily be fatal, that they could not afford to wait for the salutary permanent effects of freedom. In the modern world, the greater size of political communities, and above all, the separation between spiritual and temporal authority (which placed the direction of men's consciences in other hands than those which controlled their worldly affairs), prevented so great an interference by law in the details of private life; but the engines of moral repression have been wielded more strenuously against divergence from the reigning opinion in self-regarding, than even in social matters; religion, the most powerful of the elements which have entered into the formation of moral feeling, having almost always been governed either by the ambition of a hierarchy, seeking control over every department of human conduct, or by the spirit of Puritanism. And some of those modern reformers who have placed themselves in strongest opposition to the religions of the past, have been noway behind either churches or sects in their assertion of the right of spiritual domination: M. Comte, in particular, whose social system, as unfolded in his *Traité de Politique Positive,*[3] aims at establishing (though by moral more than by legal appliances) a despotism of society over the individual, surpassing anything contemplated in the political ideal of the most rigid disciplinarian among the ancient philosophers.

Apart from the peculiar tenets of individual thinkers, there is also in the world at large an increasing inclination to stretch unduly the powers of society over the individual, both by the force of opinion and even by that of legislation and as the tendency of all the changes taking place in the world is to strengthen society, and diminish the power of the individual, this encroachment is not one of the evils which tend spontaneously to disappear, but, on the contrary, to grow more and more formidable. The disposition of mankind, whether as rulers or as fellow-citizens, to impose their own opinions and inclinations as a rule of conduct on others, is so energetically supported by some of the best and by some of the

worst feelings incident to human nature, that it is hardly ever kept under restraint by anything but want of power; and as the power is not declining, but growing, unless a strong barrier of moral conviction can be raised against the mischief, we must expect, in the present circumstances of the world, to see it increase.

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Endnotes

- Note 1: Akbar I or Akbar the Great (1542–1605), the third Mughal emperor, reigned from 1556 to 1605; Charlemagne (747–814), the first Holy Roman Emperor, reigned from 800 to 828.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: "Combination" referred to what is now known as trade unionism: that is, collective bargaining of workers with an employer.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: *System of Positive Polity* (1852), by the French philosopher Auguste Comte (1789–1857).Return to reference 3

From *Chapter 3. Of Individuality as One of the Elements of Well-Being*

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Few persons, out of Germany, even comprehend the meaning of the doctrine which Wilhelm von Humboldt, so eminent both as a savant and as a politician, made the text of a treatise—that "the end of man, or that which is prescribed by the eternal or immutable dictates of reason, and not suggested by vague and transient desires, is the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole"; that, therefore, the object "towards which every human being must ceaselessly direct his efforts, and on which especially those who design to influence their fellow men must ever keep their eyes, is the individuality of power and development"; that for this there are two requisites, "freedom, and variety of situations"; and that from the union of these arise "individual vigor and manifold diversity," which combine themselves in "originality."[4]

Little, however, as people are accustomed to a doctrine like that of Von Humboldt, and surprising as it may be to them to find so high a value attached to individuality, the question, one must nevertheless think, can only be one of degree. No one's idea of excellence in conduct is that people should do absolutely nothing but copy one another. No one would assert that people ought not to put into their mode of life, and into the conduct of their concerns, any impress whatever of their own judgment, or of their own individual character. On the other hand, it would be absurd to pretend that people ought to live as if nothing whatever had been known in the world before they came into it; as if experience had as yet done nothing towards showing that one mode of existence, or conduct, is preferable to another. Nobody denies that people should be so taught and trained in youth, as to know and benefit by the ascertained results of human experience. But it is the privilege and

proper condition of a human being, arrived at the maturity of his faculties, to use and interpret experience in his own way. It is for him to find out what part of recorded experience is properly applicable to his own circumstances and character. The traditions and customs of other people are, to a certain extent, evidence of what their experience has taught *them;* presumptive evidence, and as such, have a claim to his deference: but, in the first place, their experience may be too narrow; or they may not have interpreted it rightly. Secondly, their interpretation of experience may be correct, but unsuitable to him. Customs are made for customary circumstances, and customary characters; and his circumstances or his character may be uncustomary. Thirdly, though the customs be both good as customs, and suitable to him, yet to conform to custom, merely *as* custom, does not educate or develop in him any of the qualities which are the distinctive endowment of a human being. The human faculties of perception, judgment, discriminative feeling, mental activity, and even moral preference are exercised only in making a choice. He who does anything because it is the custom makes no choice. He gains no practice either in discerning or in desiring what is best. The mental and moral, like the muscular powers, are improved only by being used. The faculties are called into no exercise by doing a thing merely because others do it, no more than by believing a thing only because others believe it. If the grounds of an opinion are not conclusive to the person's own reason, his reason cannot be strengthened, but is likely to be weakened, by his adopting it: and if the inducements to an act are not such as are consentaneous[5] to his own feelings and character (where affection, or the rights of others, are not concerned) it is so much done towards rendering his feelings and character inert and torpid, instead of active and energetic.

He who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him has no need of any other faculty than the apelike one of imitation. He who chooses his plan for himself employs all his faculties. He must use observation to see, reasoning and judgment to foresee, activity to gather materials for decision, discrimination to

decide, and when he has decided, firmness and self-control to hold to his deliberate decision. And these qualities he requires and exercises exactly in proportion as the part of his conduct which he determines according to his own judgment and feelings is a large one. It is possible that he might be guided in some good path, and kept out of harm's way, without any of these things. But what will be his comparative worth as a human being? It really is of importance, not only what men do, but also what manner of men they are that do it. Among the works of man, which human life is rightly employed in perfecting and beautifying, the first in importance surely is man himself. Supposing it were possible to get houses built, corn grown, battles fought, causes tried, and even churches erected and prayers said, by machinery—by automatons in human form—it would be a considerable loss to exchange for these automatons even the men and women who at present inhabit the more civilized parts of the world, and who assuredly are but starved specimens of what nature can and will produce. Human nature is not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing.

It will probably be conceded that it is desirable people should exercise their understandings, and that an intelligent following of custom, or even occasionally an intelligent deviation from custom, is better than a blind and simply mechanical adhesion to it. To a certain extent it is admitted that our understanding should be our own: but there is not the same willingness to admit that our desires and impulses should be our own likewise; or that to possess impulses of our own, and of any strength, is anything but a peril and a snare. Yet desires and impulses are as much a part of a perfect human being, as beliefs and restraints: and strong impulses are only perilous when not properly balanced; when one set of aims and inclinations is developed into strength, while others, which ought to coexist with them, remain weak and inactive. It is not because men's desires are strong that they act ill; it is because their consciences are

weak. There is no natural connection between strong impulses and a weak conscience. The natural connection is the other way. To say that one person's desires and feelings are stronger and more various than those of another is merely to say that he has more of the raw material of human nature, and is therefore capable, perhaps of more evil, but certainly of more good. Strong impulses are but another name for energy. Energy may be turned to bad uses; but more good may always be made of an energetic nature than of an indolent and impassive one. Those who have most natural feeling are always those whose cultivated feelings may be made the strongest. The same strong susceptibilities which make the personal impulses vivid and powerful are also the source from whence are generated the most passionate love of virtue, and the sternest self-control. It is through the cultivation of these that society both does its duty and protects its interests: not by rejecting the stuff of which heroes are made, because it knows not how to make them. A person whose desires and impulses are his own—are the expression of his own nature, as it has been developed and modified by his own culture—is said to have a character. One whose desires and impulses are not his own, has no character, no more than a steam engine has a character. If, in addition to being his own, his impulses are strong, and are under the government of a strong will, he has an energetic character. Whoever thinks that individuality of desires and impulses should not be encouraged to unfold itself must maintain that society has no need of strong natures—is not the better for containing many persons who have much character—and that a high general average of energy is not desirable.

In some early states of society, these forces might be, and were, too much ahead of the power which society then possessed of disciplining and controlling them. There has been a time when the element of spontaneity and individuality was in excess, and the social principle had a hard struggle with it. The difficulty then was to induce men of strong bodies or minds to pay obedience to any rules which require them to control their impulses. To overcome this difficulty, law and discipline, like the Popes struggling against the

Emperors, asserted a power over the whole man, claiming to control all his life in order to control his character—which society had not found any other sufficient means of binding. But society has now fairly got the better of individuality; and the danger which threatens human nature is not the excess, but the deficiency, of personal impulses and preferences. Things are vastly changed, since the passions of those who were strong by station or by personal endowment were in a state of habitual rebellion against laws and ordinances, and required to be rigorously chained up to enable the persons within their reach to enjoy any particle of security. In our times, from the highest class of society down to the lowest, everyone lives as under the eye of a hostile and dreaded censorship. Not only in what concerns others, but in what concerns only themselves, the individual or the family do not ask themselves—what do I prefer? or, what would suit my character and disposition? or, what would allow the best and highest in me to have fair play, and enable it to grow and thrive? They ask themselves, what is suitable to my position? what is usually done by persons of my station and pecuniary circumstances? or (worse still) what is usually done by persons of a station and circumstances superior to mine? I do not mean that they choose what is customary, in preference to what suits their own inclination. It does not occur to them to have any inclination, except for what is customary. Thus the mind itself is bowed to the yoke: even in what people do for pleasure, conformity is the first thing thought of; they like in crowds; they exercise choice only among things commonly done: peculiarity of taste, eccentricity of conduct, are shunned equally with crimes: until by dint of not following their own nature, they have no nature to follow: their human capacities are withered and starved: they become incapable of any strong wishes or native pleasures, and are generally without either opinions or feelings of home growth, or properly their own. Now is this, or is it not, the desirable condition of human nature?

It is so, on the Calvinistic theory. According to that, the one great offense of man is self-will. All the good of which humanity is capable is comprised in obedience. You have no choice; thus you must do,

and no otherwise: "whatever is not a duty is a sin." Human nature being radically corrupt, there is no redemption for anyone until human nature is killed within him. To one holding this theory of life, crushing out any of the human faculties, capacities, and susceptibilities is no evil: man needs no capacity but that of surrendering himself to the will of God: and if he uses any of his faculties for any other purpose but to do that supposed will more effectually, he is better without them. This is the theory of Calvinism; and it is held, in a mitigated form, by many who do not consider themselves Calvinists; the mitigation consisting in giving a less ascetic interpretation to the alleged will of God; asserting it to be his will that mankind should gratify some of their inclinations; of course not in the manner they themselves prefer, but in the way of obedience, that is, in a way prescribed to them by authority; and, therefore, by the necessary conditions of the case, the same for all.

In some such insidious form there is at present a strong tendency to this narrow theory of life, and to the pinched and hidebound type of human character which it patronizes. Many persons, no doubt, sincerely think that human beings thus cramped and dwarfed are as their Maker designed them to be; just as many have thought that trees are a much finer thing when clipped into pollards,[6] or cut out into figures of animals, than as nature made them. But if it be any part of religion to believe that man was made by a good Being, it is more consistent with that faith to believe that this Being gave all human faculties that they might be cultivated and unfolded, not rooted out and consumed, and that he takes delight in every nearer approach made by his creatures to the ideal conception embodied in them, every increase in any of their capabilities of comprehension, of action, or of enjoyment. There is a different type of human excellence from the Calvinistic; a conception of humanity as having its nature bestowed on it for other purposes than merely to be abnegated. "Pagan self-assertion" is one of the elements of human worth, as well as "Christian self-denial."[7] There is a Greek ideal of self-development, which the Platonic and Christian ideal of self-government blends with, but does not supersede. It may be

better to be a John Knox than an Alcibiades, but it is better to be a Pericles[8] than either, nor would a Pericles, if we had one in these days, be without anything good which belonged to John Knox.

It is not by wearing down into uniformity all that is individual in themselves, but by cultivating it and calling it forth, within the limits imposed by the rights and interests of others, that human beings become a noble and beautiful object of contemplation; and as the works partake the character of those who do them, by the same process human life also becomes rich, diversified, and animating, furnishing more abundant aliment to high thoughts and elevating feelings, and strengthening the tie which binds every individual to the race, by making the race infinitely better worth belonging to. In proportion to the development of his individuality, each person becomes more valuable to himself, and is therefore capable of being more valuable to others. There is a greater fullness of life about his own existence, and when there is more life in the units there is more in the mass which is composed of them. As much compression as is necessary to prevent the stronger specimens of human nature from encroaching on the rights of others cannot be dispensed with; but for this there is ample compensation even in the point of view of human development. The means of development which the individual loses by being prevented from gratifying his inclinations to the injury of others are chiefly obtained at the expense of the development of other people. And even to himself there is a full equivalent in the better development of the social part of his nature, rendered possible by the restraint put upon the selfish part. To be held to rigid rules of justice for the sake of others develops the feelings and capacities which have the good of others for their object. But to be restrained in things not affecting their good, by their mere displeasure, develops nothing valuable, except such force of character as may unfold itself in resisting the restraint. If acquiesced in, it dulls and blunts the whole nature. To give any fair play to the nature of each, it is essential that different persons should be allowed to lead different lives. In proportion as this latitude has been exercised in any age, has that age been

noteworthy to posterity. Even despotism does not produce its worst effects, so long as individuality exists under it; and whatever crushes individuality is despotism, by whatever name it may be called, and whether it professes to be enforcing the will of God or the injunctions of men.

Having said that Individuality is the same thing with development, and that it is only the cultivation of individuality which produces, or can produce, well-developed human beings, I might here close the argument: for what more or better can be said of any condition of human affairs than that it brings human beings themselves nearer to the best thing they can be? or what worse can be said of any obstruction to good than that it prevents this? Doubtless, however, these considerations will not suffice to convince those who most need convincing; and it is necessary further to show that these developed human beings are of some use to the undeveloped—to point out to those who do not desire liberty, and would not avail themselves of it, that they may be in some intelligible manner rewarded for allowing other people to make use of it without hindrance.

In the first place, then, I would suggest that they might possibly learn something from them. It will not be denied by anybody, that originality is a valuable element in human affairs. There is always need of persons not only to discover new truths, and point out when what were once truths are true no longer, but also to commence new practices, and set the example of more enlightened conduct, and better taste and sense in human life. This cannot well be gainsaid by anybody who does not believe that the world has already attained perfection in all its ways and practices. It is true that this benefit is not capable of being rendered by everybody alike: there are but few persons, in comparison with the whole of mankind, whose experiments, if adopted by others, would be likely to be any improvement on established practice. But these few are the salt of the earth; without them, human life would become a stagnant pool. Not only is it they who introduce good things which did not before exist; it is they who keep the life in those which

already existed. If there were nothing new to be done, would human intellect cease to be necessary? Would it be a reason why those who do the old things should forget why they are done, and do them like cattle, not like human beings? There is only too great a tendency in the best beliefs and practices to degenerate into the mechanical; and unless there were a succession of persons whose ever-recurring originality prevents the grounds of those beliefs and practices from becoming merely traditional, such dead matter would not resist the smallest shock from anything really alive, and there would be no reason why civilization should not die out, as in the Byzantine Empire. Persons of genius, it is true, are, and are always likely to be, a small minority; but in order to have them, it is necessary to preserve the soil in which they grow. Genius can only breathe freely in an *atmosphere* of freedom. Persons of genius are, *ex vi termini;*[9] *more* individual than any other people—less capable, consequently, of fitting themselves, without hurtful compression, into any of the small number of molds which society provides in order to save its members the trouble of forming their own character. If from timidity they consent to be forced into one of these molds, and to let all that part of themselves which cannot expand under the pressure remain unexpanded, society will be little the better for their genius. If they are of a strong character, and break their fetters, they become a mark for the society which has not succeeded in reducing them to commonplace, to point at with solemn warning as "wild," "erratic," and the like; much as if one should complain of the Niagara River for not flowing smoothly between its banks like a Dutch canal.

I insist thus emphatically on the importance of genius, and the necessity of allowing it to unfold itself freely both in thought and in practice, being well aware that no one will deny the position in theory, but knowing also that almost everyone, in reality, is totally indifferent to it. People think genius a fine thing if it enables a man to write an exciting poem, or paint a picture. But in its true sense, that of originality in thought and action, though no one says that it is not a thing to be admired, nearly all, at heart, think that they can do very well without it. Unhappily this is too natural to be wondered at.

Originality is the one thing which unoriginal minds cannot feel the use of. They cannot see what it is to do for them: how should they? If they could see what it would do for them, it would not be originality. The first service which originality has to render them is that of opening their eyes: which being once fully done, they would have a chance of being themselves original. Meanwhile, recollecting that nothing was ever yet done which someone was not the first to do, and that all good things which exist are the fruits of originality, let them be modest enough to believe that there is something still left for it to accomplish, and assure themselves that they are more in need of originality, the less they are conscious of the want.

In sober truth, whatever homage may be professed, or even paid, to real or supposed mental superiority, the general tendency of things throughout the world is to render mediocrity the ascendant power among mankind. In ancient history, in the middle ages, and in a diminishing degree through the long transition from feudality to the present time, the individual was power in himself; and if he had either great talents or a high social position, he was a considerable power. At present individuals are lost in the crowd. In politics it is almost a triviality to say that public opinion now rules the world. The only power deserving the name is that of masses, and of governments while they make themselves the organ of the tendencies and instincts of masses. This is as true in the moral and social relations of private life as in public transactions. Those whose opinions go by the name of public opinion, are not always the same sort of public: in America they are the whole white population; in England, chiefly the middle class. But they are always a mass, that is to say, collective mediocrity. And what is a still greater novelty, the mass do not now take their opinions from dignitaries in Church or State, from ostensible leaders, or from books. Their thinking is done for them by men much like themselves, addressing them or speaking in their name, on the spur of the moment, through the newspapers. I am not complaining of all this. I do not assert that anything better is compatible, as a general rule, with the present low state of the human mind. But that does not hinder the government of mediocrity

from being mediocre government. No government by a democracy or a numerous aristocracy, either in its political acts or in the opinions, qualities, and tone of mind which it fosters, ever did or could rise above mediocrity, except in so far as the sovereign Many have let themselves be guided (which in their best times they always have done) by the counsels and influence of a more highly gifted and instructed One or Few. The initiation of all wise or noble things, comes and must come from individuals; generally at first from some one individual. The honor and glory of the average man is that he is capable of following that initiative; that he can respond internally to wise and noble things, and be led to them with his eyes open. I am not countenancing the sort of "hero worship" which applauds the strong man of genius for forcibly seizing on the government of the world and making it do his bidding in spite of itself.[1] All he can claim is freedom to point out the way. The power of compelling others into it is not only inconsistent with the freedom and development of all the rest, but corrupting to the strong man himself. It does seem, however, that when the opinions of masses of merely average men are everywhere become or becoming the dominant power, the counterpoise and corrective to that tendency would be the more and more pronounced individuality of those who stand on the higher eminences of thought. It is in these circumstances most especially that exceptional individuals, instead of being deterred, should be encouraged in acting differently from the mass. In other times there was no advantage in their doing so, unless they acted not only differently, but better. In this age, the mere example of nonconformity, the mere refusal to bend the knee to custom, is itself a service. Precisely because the tyranny of opinion is such as to make eccentricity a reproach, it is desirable, in order to break through that tyranny, that people should be eccentric. Eccentricity has always abounded when and where strength of character has abounded; and the amount of eccentricity in a society has generally been proportional to the amount of genius, mental vigor, and moral courage which it contained. That so few now dare to be eccentric marks the chief danger of the time.

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There is one characteristic of the present direction of public opinion, peculiarly calculated to make it intolerant of any marked demonstration of individuality. The general average of mankind are not only moderate in intellect, but also moderate in inclinations: they have no tastes or wishes strong enough to incline them to do anything unusual, and they consequently do not understand those who have, and class all such with the wild and intemperate whom they are accustomed to look down upon. Now, in addition to this fact which is general, we have only to suppose that a strong movement has set in towards the improvement of morals, and it is evident what we have to expect. In these days such a movement has set in; much has actually been effected in the way of increased regularity of conduct, and discouragement of excesses; and there is a philanthropic spirit abroad, for the exercise of which there is no more inviting field than the moral and prudential improvement of our fellow creatures. These tendencies of the times cause the public to be more disposed than at most former periods to prescribe general rules of conduct, and endeavor to make everyone conform to the approved standard. And that standard, express or tacit, is to desire nothing strongly. Its ideal of character is to be without any marked character; to maim by compression, like a Chinese lady's foot,[2] every part of human nature which stands out prominently, and tends to make the person markedly dissimilar in outline to commonplace humanity.

As is usually the case with ideals which exclude one half of what is desirable, the present standard of approbation produces only an inferior imitation of the other half. Instead of great energies guided by vigorous reason, and strong feelings strongly controlled by a conscientious will, its result is weak feelings and weak energies, which therefore can be kept in outward conformity to rule without any strength either of will or reason. Already energetic characters on any large scale are becoming merely traditional. There is now scarcely any outlet for energy in this country except business. The

energy expended in this may still be regarded as considerable. What little is left from that employment, is expended on some hobby; which may be a useful, even a philanthropic hobby, but is always some one thing, and generally a thing of small dimensions. The greatness of England is now all collective: individually small, we only appear capable of anything great by our habit of combining; and with this our moral and religious philanthropies are perfectly contented. But it was men of another stamp than this that made England what it has been; and men of another stamp will be needed to prevent its decline.

The despotism of custom is everywhere the standing hindrance to human advancement, being in unceasing antagonism to that disposition to aim at something better than customary, which is called, according to circumstances, the spirit of liberty, or that of progress or improvement. The spirit of improvement is not always a spirit of liberty, for it may aim at forcing improvements on an unwilling people; and the spirit of liberty, in so far as it resists such attempts, may ally itself locally and temporarily with the opponents of improvement; but the only unfailing and permanent source of improvement is liberty, since by it there are as many possible independent centers of improvement as there are individuals. The progressive principle, however, in either shape, whether as the love of liberty or of improvement, is antagonistic to the sway of Custom, involving at least emancipation from that yoke; and the contest between the two constitutes the chief interest of the history of mankind. The greater part of the world has, properly speaking, no history, because the despotism of Custom is complete. This is the case over the whole East. Custom is there, in all things, the final appeal; justice and right mean conformity to custom; the argument of custom no one, unless some tyrant intoxicated with power, thinks of resisting. And we see the result. Those nations must once have had originality; they did not start out of the ground populous, lettered, and versed in many of the arts of life; they made themselves all this, and were then the greatest and most powerful nations of the world. What are they now? The subjects or

dependants of tribes whose forefathers wandered in the forests when theirs had magnificent palaces and gorgeous temples, but over whom custom exercised only a divided rule with liberty and progress. A people, it appears, may be progressive for a certain length of time, and then stop: when does it stop? When it ceases to possess individuality. If a similar change should befall the nations of Europe, it will not be in exactly the same shape: the despotism of custom with which these nations are threatened is not precisely stationariness. It proscribes singularity, but it does not preclude change, provided all change together. We have discarded the fixed costumes of our forefathers; everyone must still dress like other people, but the fashion may change once or twice a year. We thus take care that when there is change it shall be for change's sake, and not from any idea of beauty or convenience; for the same idea of beauty or convenience would not strike all the world at the same moment, and be simultaneously thrown aside by all at another moment. But we are progressive as well as changeable: we continually make new inventions in mechanical things, and keep them until they are again superseded by better; we are eager for improvement in politics, in education, even in morals, though in this last our idea of improvement chiefly consists in persuading or forcing other people to be as good as ourselves. It is not progress that we object to; on the contrary, we flatter ourselves that we are the most progressive people who ever lived. It is individuality that we war against: we should think we had done wonders if we had made ourselves all alike; forgetting that the unlikeness of one person to another is generally the first thing which draws the attention of either to the imperfection of his own type, and the superiority of another, or the possibility, by combining the advantages of both, of producing something better than either. We have a warning example in China—a nation of much talent, and, in some respects, even wisdom, owing to the rare good fortune of having been provided at an early period with a particularly good set of customs, the work, in some measure, of men to whom even the most enlightened European must accord, under certain limitations, the title of sages and philosophers. They are remarkable, too, in the excellence of

their apparatus for impressing, as far as possible, the best wisdom they possess upon every mind in the community, and securing that those who have appropriated most of it shall occupy the posts of honor and power. Surely the people who did this have discovered the secret of human progressiveness, and must have kept themselves steadily at the head of the movement of the world. On the contrary, they have become stationary—have remained so for thousands of years; and if they are ever to be farther improved, it must be by foreigners. They have succeeded beyond all hope in what English philanthropists are so industriously working at—in making a people all alike, all governing their thoughts and conduct by the same maxims and rules; and these are the fruits. The modern regime of public opinion is, in an unorganized form, what the Chinese educational and political systems are in an organized; and unless individuality shall be able successfully to assert itself against this yoke, Europe, notwithstanding its noble antecedents and its professed Christianity, will tend to become another China.

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1859

Endnotes

- Note 4: From *The Sphere and Duties of Government,* by Baron Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835), Prussian statesman and man of letters. Originally written in 1791, the treatise was first published in Germany in 1852 and was translated into English in 1854.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Agreeable.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Trees that acquire an artificial shape by being cut back to produce a mass of dense foliage.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: From the *Essays* (1848) of John Sterling (1806–1844), a writer and friend of Carlyle's.Return to reference 7

- Note 8: A model statesman in Athens (495–429 B.C.E.). Knox (1514–1572), a stern Scottish Calvinist reformer. Alcibiades (450–404 B.C.E.), a brilliant but dissolute Athenian commander.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: By force of the term (Latin); that is, by definition.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: As advocated by Thomas Carlyle in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The practice of foot-binding, which aimed to make women's feet only three inches long, was widespread in China from the 10th century until its formal prohibition in 1911.Return to reference 2

From The Subjection of Women[1]

From *Chapter 1*

The object of this Essay is to explain as clearly as I am able, the grounds of an opinion which I have held from the very earliest period when I had formed any opinions at all on social or political matters, and which, instead of being weakened or modified, has been constantly growing stronger by the progress of reflection and the experience of life: That the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes—the legal subordination of one sex to the other—is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other.

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Some will object, that a comparison cannot fairly be made between the government of the male sex and the forms of unjust power[2] which I have adduced in illustration of it, since these are arbitrary, and the effect of mere usurpation, while it on the contrary is natural. But was there ever any domination which did not appear natural to those who possessed it? There was a time when the division of mankind into two classes, a small one of masters and a numerous one of slaves, appeared, even to the most cultivated minds, to be a natural, and the only natural, condition of the human race. No less an intellect, and one which contributed no less to the progress of human thought, than Aristotle, held this opinion without doubt or misgiving; and rested it on the same premises on which the same assertion in regard to the dominion of men over women is usually based, namely that there are different natures among mankind, free natures, and slave natures; that the Greeks were of a free nature, the barbarian races of Thracians and Asiatics of a slave nature. But why need I go back to Aristotle? Did not the slaveowners of the Southern United States maintain the same doctrine, with all the fanaticism with which men cling to the theories that justify their

passions and legitimate their personal interests? Did they not call heaven and earth to witness that the dominion of the white man over the black is natural, that the black race is by nature incapable of freedom, and marked out for slavery? some even going so far as to say that the freedom of manual laborers is an unnatural order of things anywhere. Again, the theorists of absolute monarchy have always affirmed it to be the only natural form of government; issuing from the patriarchal, which was the primitive and spontaneous form of society, framed on the model of the paternal, which is anterior to society itself, and, as they contend, the most natural authority of all. Nay, for that matter, the law of force itself, to those who could not plead any other, has always seemed the most natural of all grounds for the exercise of authority. Conquering races hold it to be Nature's own dictate that the conquered should obey the conquerors, or, as they euphoniously paraphrase it, that the feebler and more unwarlike races should submit to the braver and manlier. The smallest acquaintance with human life in the middle ages, shows how supremely natural the dominion of the feudal nobility over men of low condition appeared to the nobility themselves, and how unnatural the conception seemed, of a person of the inferior class claiming equality with them, or exercising authority over them. It hardly seemed less so to the class held in subjection. The emancipated serfs and burgesses, even in their most vigorous struggles, never made any pretension to a share of authority; they only demanded more or less of limitation to the power of tyrannizing over them. So true is it that unnatural generally means only uncustomary, and that everything which is usual appears natural. The subjection of women to men being a universal custom, any departure from it quite naturally appears unnatural. But how entirely, even in this case, the feeling is dependent on custom, appears by ample experience. Nothing so much astonishes the people of distant parts of the world, when they first learn anything about England, as to be told that it is under a queen: the thing seems to them so unnatural as to be almost incredible. To Englishmen this does not seem in the least degree unnatural, because they are used to it; but they do feel it unnatural that women should be soldiers or members

of Parliament. In the feudal ages, on the contrary, war and politics were not thought unnatural to women, because not unusual; it seemed natural that women of the privileged classes should be of manly character, inferior in nothing but bodily strength to their husbands and fathers. The independence of women seemed rather less unnatural to the Greeks than to other ancients, on account of the fabulous Amazons[3] (whom they believed to be historical), and the partial example afforded by the Spartan women; who, though no less subordinate by law than in other Greek states, were more free in fact, and being trained to bodily exercises in the same manner with men, gave ample proof that they were not naturally disqualified for them. There can be little doubt that Spartan experience suggested to Plato, among many other of his doctrines, that of the social and political equality of the two sexes.[4]

But, it will be said, the rule of men over women differs from all these others in not being a rule of force: it is accepted voluntarily; women make no complaint, and are consenting parties to it. In the first place, a great number of women do not accept it. Ever since there have been women able to make their sentiments known by their writings (the only mode of publicity which society permits to them), an increasing number of them have recorded protests against their present social condition: and recently many thousands of them, headed by the most eminent women known to the public, have petitioned Parliament for their admission to the Parliamentary Suffrage.[5] The claim of women to be educated as solidly, and in the same branches of knowledge, as men, is urged with growing intensity, and with a great prospect of success; while the demand for their admission into professions and occupations hitherto closed against them, becomes every year more urgent. Though there are not in this country, as there are in the United States, periodical Conventions[6] and an organized party to agitate for the Rights of Women, there is a numerous and active Society organized and managed by women, for the more limited object of obtaining the political franchise. Nor is it only in our own country and in America that women are beginning to protest, more or less collectively,

against the disabilities under which they labor. France, and Italy, and Switzerland, and Russia now afford examples of the same thing. How many more women there are who silently cherish similar aspirations, no one can possibly know; but there are abundant tokens how many *would* cherish them, were they not so strenuously taught to repress them as contrary to the proprieties of their sex. It must be remembered, also, that no enslaved class ever asked for complete liberty at once. When Simon de Montfort[7] called the deputies of the commons to sit for the first time in Parliament, did any of them dream of demanding that an assembly, elected by their constituents, should make and destroy ministries, and dictate to the king in affairs of state? No such thought entered into the imagination of the most ambitious of them. The nobility had already these pretensions; the commons pretended to nothing but to be exempt from arbitrary taxation, and from the gross individual oppression of the king's officers. It is a political law of nature that those who are under any power of ancient origin, never begin by complaining of the power itself, but only of its oppressive exercise. There is never any want of women who complain of ill usage by their husbands. There would be infinitely more, if complaint were not the greatest of all provocatives to a repetition and increase of the ill usage. It is this which frustrates all attempts to maintain the power but protect the woman against its abuses. In no other case (except that of a child) is the person who has been proved judicially to have suffered an injury, replaced under the physical power of the culprit who inflicted it. Accordingly wives, even in the most extreme and protracted cases of bodily ill usage, hardly ever dare avail themselves of the laws made for their protection: and if, in a moment of irrepressible indignation, or by the interference of neighbors, they are induced to do so, their whole effort afterward is to disclose as little as they can, and to beg off their tyrant from his merited chastisement.

All causes, social and natural, combine to make it unlikely that women should be collectively rebellious to the power of men. They are so far in a position different from all other subject classes, that their masters require something more from them than actual service.

Men do not want solely the obedience of women, they want their sentiments. All men, except the most brutish, desire to have, in the woman most nearly connected with them, not a forced slave but a willing one, not a slave merely, but a favorite. They have therefore put everything in practice to enslave their minds. The masters of all other slaves rely, for maintaining obedience, on fear; either fear of themselves, or religious fears. The masters of women wanted more than simple obedience, and they turned the whole force of education to effect their purpose. All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite to that of men; not self-will, and government by self-control, but submission, and yielding to the control of others. All the moralities tell them that it is the duty of women, and all the current sentimentalities that it is their nature, to live for others; to make complete abnegation of themselves, and to have no life but in their affections. And by their affections are meant the only ones they are allowed to have—those to the men with whom they are connected, or to the children who constitute an additional and indefeasible tie between them and a man. When we put together three things—first, the natural attraction between opposite sexes; secondly, the wife's entire dependence on the husband, every privilege or pleasure she has being either his gift, or depending entirely on his will; and lastly, that the principal object of human pursuit, consideration, and all objects of social ambition, can in general be sought or obtained by her only through him, it would be a miracle if the object of being attractive to men had not become the polar star of feminine education and formation of character. And, this great means of influence over the minds of women having been acquired, an instinct of selfishness made men avail themselves of it to the utmost as a means of holding women in subjection, by representing to them meekness, submissiveness, and resignation of all individual will into the hands of a man, as an essential part of sexual attractiveness. Can it be doubted that any of the other yokes which mankind have succeeded in breaking, would have subsisted till now if the same means had existed, and had been as sedulously used, to bow down their minds to it? If it had been made the object of the life of every

young plebeian to find personal favor in the eyes of some patrician, of every young serf with some seigneur; if domestication with him, and a share of his personal affections, had been held out as the prize which they all should look out for, the most gifted and aspiring being able to reckon on the most desirable prizes; and if, when this prize had been obtained, they had been shut out by a wall of brass from all interests not centering in him, all feelings and desires but those which he shared or inculcated; would not serfs and seigneurs, plebeians and patricians, have been as broadly distinguished at this day as men and women are? and would not all but a thinker here and there, have believed the distinction to be a fundamental and unalterable fact in human nature?

The preceding considerations are amply sufficient to show that custom, however universal it may be, affords in this case no presumption, and ought not to create any prejudice, in favor of the arrangements which place women in social and political subjection to men. But I may go farther, and maintain that the course of history, and the tendencies of progressive human society, afford not only no presumption in favor of this system of inequality of rights, but a strong one against it; and that, so far as the whole course of human improvement up to this time, the whole stream of modern tendencies, warrants any inference on the subject, it is, that this relic of the past is discordant with the future, and must necessarily disappear.

For, what is the peculiar character of the modern world—the difference which chiefly distinguishes modern institutions, modern social ideas, modern life itself, from those of times long past? It is, that human beings are no longer born to their place in life, and chained down by an inexorable bond to the place they are born to, but are free to employ their faculties, and such favourable chances as offer, to achieve the lot which may appear to them most desirable.

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The social subordination of women thus stands out an isolated fact in modern social institutions; a solitary breach of what has become their fundamental law; a single relic of an old world of thought and practice exploded in everything else, but retained in the one thing of most universal interest; as if a gigantic dolmen,[8] or a vast temple of Jupiter Olympius, occupied the site of St. Paul's[9] and received daily worship, while the surrounding Christian churches were only resorted to on fasts and festivals. This entire discrepancy between one social fact and all those which accompany it, and the radical opposition between its nature and the progressive movement which is the boast of the modern world, and which has successively swept away everything else of an analogous character, surely affords, to a conscientious observer of human tendencies, serious matter for reflection. It raises a *primâ facie* presumption on the unfavorable side, far outweighing any which custom and usage could in such circumstances create on the favorable; and should at least suffice to make this, like the choice between republicanism and royalty, a balanced question.

The least that can be demanded is, that the question should not be considered as prejudged by existing fact and existing opinion, but open to discussion on its merits, as a question of justice and expediency: the decision on this, as on any of the other social arrangements of mankind, depending on what an enlightened estimate of tendencies and consequences may show to be most advantageous to humanity in general, without distinction of sex. And the discussion must be a real discussion, descending to foundations, and not resting satisfied with vague and general assertions. It will not do, for instance, to assert in general terms, that the experience of mankind has pronounced in favor of the existing system. Experience cannot possibly have decided between two courses, so long as there has only been experience of one. If it be said that the doctrine of the equality of the sexes rests only on theory, it must be remembered that the contrary doctrine also has only theory to rest upon. All that is proved in its favor by direct experience, is that mankind have been able to exist under it, and to attain the degree

of improvement and prosperity which we now see; but whether that prosperity has been attained sooner, or is now greater, than it would have been under the other system, experience does not say. On the other hand, experience does say, that every step in improvement has been so invariably accompanied by a step made in raising the social position of women, that historians and philosophers have been led to adopt their elevation or debasement as on the whole the surest test and most correct measure of the civilization of a people or an age. Through all the progressive period of human history, the condition of women has been approaching nearer to equality with men. This does not of itself prove that the assimilation must go on to complete equality; but it assuredly affords some presumption that such is the case.

Neither does it avail anything to say that the *nature* of the two sexes adapts them to their present functions and position, and renders these appropriate to them. Standing on the ground of common sense and the constitution of the human mind, I deny that any one knows, or can know, the nature of the two sexes, as long as they have only been seen in their present relation to one another. If men had ever been found in society without women, or women without men, or if there had been a society of men and women in which the women were not under the control of the men, something might have been positively known about the mental and moral differences which may be inherent in the nature of each. What is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing—the result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others. It may be asserted without scruple, that no other class of dependents have had their character so entirely distorted from its natural proportions by their relation with their masters; for, if conquered and slave races have been, in some respects, more forcibly repressed, whatever in them has not been crushed down by an iron heel has generally been let alone, and if left with any liberty of development, it has developed itself according to its own laws; but in the case of women, a hot-house[1] and stove cultivation has always been carried on of some of the capabilities of their nature,

for the benefit and pleasure of their masters. Then, because certain products of the general vital force sprout luxuriantly and reach a great development in this heated atmosphere and under this active nurture and watering, while other shoots from the same root, which are left outside in the wintry air, with ice purposely heaped all round them, have a stunted growth, and some are burnt off with fire and disappear; men, with that inability to recognize their own work which distinguishes the unanalytic mind, indolently believe that the tree grows of itself in the way they have made it grow, and that it would die if one half of it were not kept in a vapour bath and the other half in the snow.

Of all difficulties which impede the progress of thought, and the formation of well-grounded opinions on life and social arrangements, the greatest is now the unspeakable ignorance and inattention of mankind in respect to the influences which form human character. Whatever any portion of the human species now are, or seem to be, such, it is supposed, they have a natural tendency to be: even when the most elementary knowledge of the circumstances in which they have been placed, clearly points out the causes that made them what they are. Because a cottier[2] deeply in arrears to his landlord is not industrious, there are people who think that the Irish are naturally idle. Because constitutions can be overthrown when the authorities appointed to execute them turn their arms against them, there are people who think the French incapable of free government. Because the Greeks cheated the Turks, and the Turks only plundered the Greeks, there are persons who think that the Turks are naturally more sincere: and because women, as is often said, care nothing about politics except their personalities, it is supposed that the general good is naturally less interesting to women than to men. History, which is now so much better understood than formerly, teaches another lesson: if only by showing the extraordinary susceptibility of human nature to external influences, and the extreme variableness of those of its manifestations which are supposed to be most universal and uniform. But in history, as in traveling, men usually see only what they already had in their own

minds; and few learn much from history, who do not bring much with them to its study.

Hence, in regard to that most difficult question, what are the natural differences between the two sexes—a subject on which it is impossible in the present state of society to obtain complete and correct knowledge—while almost everybody dogmatizes upon it, almost all neglect and make light of the only means by which any partial insight can be obtained into it. This is, an analytic study of the most important department of psychology, the laws of the influence of circumstances on character. For, however great and apparently ineradicable the moral and intellectual differences between men and women might be, the evidence of their being natural differences could only be negative. Those only could be inferred to be natural which could not possibly be artificial—the residuum, after deducting every characteristic of either sex which can admit of being explained from education or external circumstances. The profoundest knowledge of the laws of the formation of character is indispensable to entitle any one to affirm even that there is any difference, much more what the difference is, between the two sexes considered as moral and rational beings; and since no one, as yet, has that knowledge (for there is hardly any subject which, in proportion to its importance, has been so little studied), no one is thus far entitled to any positive opinion on the subject. Conjectures are all that can at present be made; conjectures more or less probable, according as more or less authorized by such knowledge as we yet have of the laws of psychology, as applied to the formation of character.

Even the preliminary knowledge, what the differences between the sexes now are, apart from all question as to how they are made what they are, is still in the crudest[3] and most incomplete state. Medical practitioners and physiologists have ascertained, to some extent, the differences in bodily constitution; and this is an important element to the psychologist: but hardly any medical practitioner is a psychologist. Respecting the mental characteristics of women; their observations are of no more worth than those of common men. It is

a subject on which nothing final can be known, so long as those who alone can really know it, women themselves, have given but little testimony, and that little, mostly suborned. It is easy to know stupid women. Stupidity is much the same all the world over. A stupid person's notions and feelings may confidently be inferred from those which prevail in the circle by which the person is surrounded. Not so with those whose opinions and feelings are an emanation from their own nature and faculties. It is only a man here and there who has any tolerable knowledge of the character even of the women of his own family. I do not mean, of their capabilities; these nobody knows, not even themselves, because most of them have never been called out. I mean their actually existing thoughts and feelings. Many a man thinks he perfectly understands women, because he has had amatory relations with several, perhaps with many of them. If he is a good observer, and his experience extends to quality as well as quantity, he may have learnt something of one narrow department of their nature—an important department, no doubt. But of all the rest of it, few persons are generally more ignorant, because there are few from whom it is so carefully hidden. The most favorable case which a man can generally have for studying the character of a woman, is that of his own wife: for the opportunities are greater, and the cases of complete sympathy not so unspeakably rare. And in fact, this is the source from which any knowledge worth having on the subject has, I believe, generally come. But most men have not had the opportunity of studying in this way more than a single case: accordingly one can, to an almost laughable degree, infer what a man's wife is like, from his opinions about women in general. To make even this one case yield any result, the woman must be worth knowing, and the man not only a competent judge, but of a character so sympathetic in itself, and so well adapted to hers, that he can either read her mind by sympathetic intuition, or has nothing in himself which makes her shy of disclosing it. Hardly anything, I believe, can be more rare than this conjunction. It often happens that there is the most complete unity of feeling and community of interests as to all external things, yet the one has as little admission into the internal life of the other as if they were

common acquaintance. Even with true affection, authority on the one side and subordination on the other prevent perfect confidence. Though nothing may be intentionally withheld, much is not shown. In the analogous relation of parent and child, the corresponding phenomenon must have been in the observation of every one. As between father and son, how many are the cases in which the father, in spite of real affection on both sides, obviously to all the world does not know, nor suspect, parts of the son's character familiar to his companions and equals. The truth is, that the position of looking up to another is extremely unpropitious to complete sincerity and openness with him. The fear of losing ground in his opinion or in his feelings is so strong, that even in an upright character, there is an unconscious tendency to show only the best side, or the side which, though not the best, is that which he most likes to see: and it may be confidently said that thorough knowledge of one another hardly ever exists, but between persons who, besides being intimates, are equals. How much more true, then, must all this be, when the one is not only under the authority of the other, but has it inculcated on her as a duty to reckon everything else subordinate to his comfort and pleasure, and to let him neither see nor feel anything coming from her, except what is agreeable to him. All these difficulties stand in the way of a man's obtaining any thorough knowledge even of the one woman whom alone, in general, he has sufficient opportunity of studying. When we further consider that to understand one woman is not necessarily to understand any other woman; that even if he could study many women of one rank, or of one country, he would not thereby understand women of other ranks or countries; and even if he did, they are still only the women of a single period of history; we may safely assert that the knowledge which men can acquire of women, even as they have been and are, without reference to what they might be, is wretchedly imperfect and superficial, and always will be so, until women themselves have told all that they have to tell.

And this time has not come; nor will it come otherwise than gradually. It is but of yesterday that women have either been

qualified by literary accomplishments, or permitted by society, to tell anything to the general public. As yet very few of them dare tell anything, which men, on whom their literary success depends, are unwilling to hear. Let us remember in what manner, up to a very recent time, the expression, even by a male author, of uncustomary opinions, or what are deemed eccentric feelings, usually was, and in some degree still is, received; and we may form some faint conception under what impediments a woman, who is brought up to think custom and opinion her sovereign rule, attempts to express in books anything drawn from the depths of her own nature. The greatest woman who has left writings behind her sufficient to give her an eminent rank in the literature of her country, thought it necessary to prefix as a motto to her boldest work, "Un homme peut braver l'opinion; une femme doit s'y soumettre."[4] The greater part of what women write about women is mere sycophancy to men. In the case of unmarried women, much of it seems only intended to increase their chance of a husband. Many, both married and unmarried, overstep the mark, and inculcate a servility beyond what is desired or relished by any man, except the very vulgarest. But this is not so often the case as, even at a quite late period, it still was. Literary women are becoming more freespoken, and more willing to express their real sentiments. Unfortunately, in this country especially, they are themselves such artificial products, that their sentiments are compounded of a small element of individual observation and consciousness, and a very large one of acquired associations. This will be less and less the case, but it will remain true to a great extent, as long as social institutions do not admit the same free development of originality in women which is possible to men. When that time comes, and not before, we shall see, and not merely hear, as much as it is necessary to know of the nature of women, and the adaptation of other things to it.

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One thing we may be certain of—that what is contrary to women's nature to do, they never will be made to do by simply giving their nature free play. The anxiety of mankind to interfere in behalf of nature, for fear lest nature should not succeed in effecting its purpose, is an altogether unnecessary solicitude. What women by nature cannot do, it is quite superfluous to forbid them from doing. What they can do, but not so well as the men who are their competitors, competition suffices to exclude them from; since nobody asks for protective duties and bounties in favor of women; it is only asked that the present bounties and protective duties in favor of men should be recalled. If women have a greater natural inclination for some things than for others, there is no need of laws or social inculcation to make the majority of them do the former in preference to the latter. Whatever women's services are most wanted for, the free play of competition will hold out the strongest inducements to them to undertake. And, as the words imply, they are most wanted for the things for which they are most fit; by the apportionment of which to them, the collective faculties of the two sexes can be applied on the whole with the greatest sum of valuable result.

The general opinion of men is supposed to be, that the natural vocation of a woman is that of a wife and mother. I say, is supposed to be, because, judging from acts—from the whole of the present constitution of society—one might infer that their opinion was the direct contrary. They might be supposed to think that the alleged natural vocation of women was of all things the most repugnant to their nature; insomuch that if they are free to do anything else—if any other means of living, or occupation of their time and faculties, is open, which has any chance of appearing desirable to them—there will not be enough of them who will be willing to accept the condition said to be natural to them. If this is the real opinion of men in general, it would be well that it should be spoken out. I should like to hear somebody openly enunciating the doctrine (it is already implied in much that is written on the subject)—"It is necessary to society that women should marry and produce children.

They will not do so unless they are compelled. Therefore it is necessary to compel them." The merits of the case would then be clearly defined. It would be exactly that of the slaveholders of South Carolina and Louisiana. "It is necessary that cotton and sugar should be grown. White men cannot produce them. Negroes will not, for any wages which we choose to give. *Ergo* they must be compelled." An illustration still closer to the point is that of impressment.[5] Sailors must absolutely be had to defend the country. It often happens that they will not voluntarily enlist. Therefore there must be the power of forcing them. How often has this logic been used! and, but for one flaw in it, without doubt it would have been successful up to this day. But it is open to the retort—First pay the sailors the honest value of their labor. When you have made it as well worth their while to serve you, as to work for other employers, you will have no more difficulty than others have in obtaining their services. To this there is no logical answer except "I will not:" and as people are now not only ashamed, but are not desirous, to rob the laborer of his hire, impressment is no longer advocated. Those who attempt to force women into marriage by closing all other doors against them, lay themselves open to a similar retort. If they mean what they say, their opinion must evidently be, that men do not render the married condition so desirable to women, as to induce them to accept it for its own recommendations. It is not a sign of one's thinking the boon one offers very attractive, when one allows only Hobson's choice,[6] "that or none." And here, I believe, is the clue to the feelings of those men, who have a real antipathy to the equal freedom of women. I believe they are afraid, not lest women should be unwilling to marry, for I do not think that any one in reality has that apprehension; but lest they should insist that marriage should be on equal conditions; lest all women of spirit and capacity should prefer doing almost anything else, not in their own eyes degrading, rather than marry, when marrying is giving themselves a master, and a master too of all their earthly possessions. And truly, if this consequence were necessarily incident to marriage, I think that the apprehension would be very well founded. I agree in thinking it

probable that few women, capable of anything else, would, unless under an irresistible *entrainement,*[7] rendering them for the time insensible to anything but itself, choose such a lot, when any other means were open to them of filling a conventionally honorable place in life: and if men are determined that the law of marriage shall be a law of despotism, they are quite right, in point of mere policy, in leaving to women only Hobson's choice. But, in that case, all that has been done in the modern world to relax the chain on the minds of women, has been a mistake. They never should have been allowed to receive a literary education. Women who read, much more women who write, are, in the existing constitution of things, a contradiction and a disturbing element: and it was wrong to bring women up with any acquirements but those of an odalisque, or of a domestic servant.

1860 1869

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  After its 1869 publication in England and America, Mill's *The Subjection of Women* was quickly adopted by feminist activists as the definitive analysis of the position of women in society. Throughout the nineteenth century, reform efforts focused on the conditions of women's work, particularly in mines and factories; access to better jobs and higher education; and married women's property rights. Women's suffrage started attracting support in the 1860s; Mill introduced the first parliamentary motion extending the franchise to women in 1866.
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: As examples of unjust power Mill had cited the forceful control of people by enslavers or of nations by military despots.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A mythical race of woman warriors.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Plato's *Republic*, book 5. Plato was Athenian.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: As a member of the House of Commons, Mill had introduced a petition for women's suffrage in 1866.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Such as the Women's Rights Convention held at Worcester, Massachusetts, in October 1850, which had occasioned an essay by Mill's wife titled "Enfranchisement of Women" (1851).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: English nobleman and statesman (ca. 1208–1265), who assembled a parliament in 1265 that has been called the basis of the modern House of Commons.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Prehistoric stone monument, here associated with pagan religious rites.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The cathedral in the city of London.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A heated greenhouse.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Tenant cottager on a small Irish farm.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Roughest, least refined.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A man can defy what is thought; a woman must submit to it (French); the epigraph to *Delphine* (1802) by Mme de Staël (1766–1817).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The practice of seizing men and forcing them into service as sailors.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A choice without an alternative, so called in reference to the practice of Thomas Hobson (1544–1630), who rented out horses and required every customer to take the horse nearest the door.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Rapture (French).Return to reference 7

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING
1806–1861

During her lifetime, Elizabeth Barrett Browning was one of England's most famous and popular poets. Passionately admired by contemporaries as diverse as John Ruskin, Algernon Charles Swinburne, and Emily Dickinson for her moral and emotional ardor and her energetic engagement with the issues of her day, she was at the time of her death in 1861 better known than her husband, Robert Browning. Her work fell out of favor in the early twentieth century as a result of modernism's (often misogynist) reaction against what was seen as the excessive didacticism and emotionalism of her poetry. Recently, scholars have become interested in her exploration of what it means to be a woman poet, her response to social and political events, and her formal innovations.

Barrett Browning was born into a family that derived much of its considerable wealth, on both her mother's and her father's sides, from plantations in Jamaica. After the abolition of slavery in 1833 and numerous lawsuits, her father lost a great deal of money and was forced to sell Hope End, the opulent estate in the Malvern Hills in Herefordshire where Barrett Browning had grown up. Despite the financial blow, Barrett Browning supported emancipation: "That is settled," she wrote to a neighbor upon hearing the news: "The consternation here is very great. Nevertheless I am glad, and always shall be, that the negroes are—virtually—free!" Barrett Browning

maintained her commitment to social justice throughout her life, often writing in defence of the exploited, the oppressed, and the unfree.

The education that Barrett Browning received was unusual for a woman of her time. Availing herself of her brother's tutor, she studied Latin and Greek; she also learned to read Hebrew. She read voraciously in history, philosophy, and literature and began to write poetry at an early age. Her father privately published her 1,462-line epic on the Battle of Marathon when she was in her early teens; her "Stanzas, Excited by Some Reflections on the Present State of Greece," appeared anonymously in *The New Monthly Magazine* when she was fifteen. But as her intellectual and literary powers matured, her personal life became increasingly circumscribed both by ill health and by her father; tyrannically protective, he had forbidden any of his eleven children to marry. By the age of thirty-nine, Elizabeth Barrett was a prominent woman of letters who lived in semi-seclusion as an invalid in her father's house in Wimpole Street in the center of London; here she occasionally received visitors in her room. One of these visitors was Robert Browning, who, moved by his admiration of her poetry, wrote to tell her "I do as I say, love these books with all my heart—and I love you too." He thereby initiated a courtship that culminated in 1846 in their secret marriage and elopement to Italy, for which her father never forgave her. In Italy Barrett Browning regained much health and strength, bearing and raising a son, Pen, to whom she was devoted, and becoming deeply involved in Italian nationalist politics. She and her husband made their home in Florence, at the house called Casa Guidi, where she lived until her death.

Barrett Browning's poetry is characterized by great erudition and a fervent moral sensibility. The former was consistently condemned by critics, but the latter was often praised. For example, in 1843, when government investigations exposed the employment of children in coal mines and factories, she wrote "The Cry of the Children," a powerful indictment of the use of child labor. Like Harriet Beecher Stowe in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1851–52), Barrett Browning

used literature as a tool of social protest and reform, lending her voice, for example, to the cause of American abolitionism in "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point" and "A Curse for a Nation." In later poems she took up the cause of the *risorgimento,* the movement to unify Italy as a nation-state, in which Italy's struggle for freedom and identity resonated with her own.

For many years Barrett Browning was best-known for her *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850), a sequence of forty-four sonnets presented under the guise of a translation from the Portuguese language, in which she recorded the stages of her love for Robert Browning. This sequence both relies on and revises Petrarchan conventions. While Petrarchan sonnets are traditionally spoken by a male poet to an inaccessible female muse, in her *Sonnets*, Barrett Browning is herself the speaker, made ill by a love that is both spiritual and physical. The poetry is formally innovative as well, invoking yet varying Petrarchan rhythms and rhyme schemes. It is also the source of one of the best-known lines from any love poem in English: "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways" (sonnet 43).

Barrett Browning's verse novel *Aurora Leigh* (1856) was also very popular when first published. Critics have recently rediscovered it as a fascinating and extensive investigation of the trials facing a female artist. When Barrett Browning first envisioned the poem, she wrote, "My chief *intention* just now is the writing of a sort of novel-poem . . . running into the midst of our conventions, and rushing into drawing-rooms and the like 'where angels fear to tread'; and so, meeting face to face and without mask the Humanity of the age, and speaking the truth as I conceive of it out plainly." The poem is a portrait of the artist as a young woman committed to a socially inclusive realist art. It is daring both in its presentation of social issues concerning women and in its claims for Aurora's poetic vocation; on her twentieth birthday, Aurora refuses a proposal of marriage from her cousin Romney, who wants her to be his partner in the liberal causes he has embraced. She wishes to be an artist in her own right. Later in the poem, she rescues a fallen woman and

takes her to Italy, where they settle together and confront a chastened Romney.

Immensely popular in its own day, *Aurora Leigh* had both admirers (like Ruskin, who asserted that it was the greatest poem written in English) and critics who found fault with both its poetry and its morality. With its crowded canvas and melodramatic plot, it seems closer to the novel than to poetry, but it is important to view the poem in the context of the debate about appropriate poetic subject matter that engaged other Victorian poets. Unlike Matthew Arnold, who believed that the present age had not produced actions heroic enough to be the subject of great poetry, and unlike Alfred, Lord Tennyson, who used Arthurian legend to represent contemporary concerns, Barrett Browning felt that the present age contained the materials for an epic poetry. Virginia Woolf writes that "Elizabeth Barrett was inspired by a flash of true genius when she rushed into the drawing-room and said that here, where we live and work, is the true place for the poet." *Aurora Leigh* succeeds in giving us what Woolf describes as "a sense of life in general, of people who are unmistakably Victorian, wrestling with the problems of their own time, all brightened, intensified, and compacted by the fire of poetry. . . . Aurora Leigh, with her passionate interest in social questions, her conflict as artist and woman, her longing for knowledge and freedom, is the true daughter of her age."

The Cry of the Children[1]

"*Φεῦ, φεῦ, τί προσδέρκεσθέ μ' ὄμμασιν, τέκνα*;"

—*Medea*[2]

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years?
They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,
And *that* cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,
The young birds are chirping in the nest,
The young fawns are playing with the shadows,
The young flowers are blowing toward the west—
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
They are weeping bitterly!
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
In the country of the free.

Do you question the young children in the sorrow
Why their tears are falling so?
The old man may weep for his to-morrow
Which is lost in Long Ago;
The old tree is leafless in the forest,
The old year is ending in the frost,
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest,
The old hope is hardest to be lost:
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
Do you ask them why they stand
Weeping sore° before the bosoms of their mothers,
In our happy Fatherland?

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their looks are sad to see,
For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses
Down the cheeks of infancy;
"Your old earth," they say, "is very dreary,"
"Our young feet," they say, "are very weak;
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—
Our grave-rest is very far to seek:
Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children,
For the outside earth is cold,
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
And the graves are for the old."

"True," say the children, "it may happen
That we die before our time:
Little Alice died last year, her grave is shapen
Like a snowball, in the rime.°
We looked into the pit prepared to take her:
Was no room for any work in the close clay!
From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,
Crying, 'Get up, little Alice! it is day.'
If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,
With your ear down, little Alice never cries;
Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,
For the smile has time for growing in her eyes:
And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in
The shroud by the kirk° chime.
It is good when it happens," say the children,
"That we die before our time."

Alas, alas, the children! they are seeking
Death in life, as best to have:

They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,
With a ceremen° from the grave.
Go out, children, from the mine and from the city,
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do;
Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty,
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through!
But they answer, "Are your cowslips of the meadows
Like our weeds anear the mine?[3]
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
From your pleasures fair and fine!

"For oh," say the children, "we are weary,
And we cannot run or leap;
If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
To drop down in them and sleep.
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,
We fall upon our faces, trying to go;
And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,
The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.
For, all day, we drag our burden tiring
Through the coal-dark, underground;
Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
In the factories, round and round.

"For, all day, the wheels are droning, turning;
Their wind comes in our faces,
Till our hearts turn, our heads with pulses burning,
And the walls turn in their places:
Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling,
Turns the long light that drops adown the wall,
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling,
All are turning, all the day, and we with all.
And all day, the iron wheels are droning,
And sometimes we could pray,
'O ye wheels,' (breaking out in a mad moaning)

‘Stop! be silent for to-day!’ ”

Ay, be silent! Let them hear each other breathing
For a moment, mouth to mouth!
Let them touch each other’s hands, in a fresh wreathing
Of their tender human youth!
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
Is not all the life God fashions or reveals:
Let them prove their living souls against the notion
That they live in you, or under you, O wheels!
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
Grinding life down from its mark;
And the children’s souls, which God is calling sunward,
Spin on blindly in the dark.

Now tell the poor young children; O my brothers,
To look up to Him and pray;
So the blessed One who blesseth all the others,
Will bless them another day.
They answer, “Who is God that He should hear us,
While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred?
When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word.
And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)
Strangers speaking at the door:
Is it likely God, with angels singing round Him,
Hears our weeping any more?

Two words, indeed, of praying we remember,
And at midnight’s hour of harm,
‘Our Father,’ looking upward in the chamber,
We say softly for a charm.
We know no other words except ‘Our Father.’
And we think that, in some pause of angels’ song,

God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,
And hold both within His right hand which is strong.
'Our Father!' If He heard us, He would surely
(For they call Him good and mild)
Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,
'Come and rest with me, my child.'

"But, no!" say the children, weeping faster,
"He is speechless as a stone:
And they tell us, of His image is the master
Who commands us to work on.
Go to!" say the children,—"up in Heaven,
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find.
Do not mock us; grief has made us unbelieving:
We look up for God, but tears have made us blind."
Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,
O my brothers, what ye preach?
For God's possible is taught by His world's loving,[4]
And the children doubt of each.

And well may the children weep before you!
They are weary ere they run;
They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory
Which is brighter than the sun.
They know the grief of man, without its wisdom;
They sink in man's despair, without its calm;
Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,
Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm:[5]
Are worn as if with age, yet unretrievingly
The harvest of its memories cannot reap,—
Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly.
Let them weep! let them weep!

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see,
For they mind you of their angels in high places,
With eyes turned on Deity.
"How long," they say, "how long, O cruel nation,
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart,—
Stifle down with a mailed° heel its palpitation,
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?
Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,
And your purple[6] shows your path!
But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper
Than the strong man in his wrath."

1843

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Barrett Browning wrote "The Cry of the Children" in response to the report of a parliamentary commission, to which her friend R. H. Horne contributed, on the labor of children in mines and factories. Many of the details of Barrett Browning's poem derive from the report. See "The Promise and Price of Industrialization" on p. 314.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Alas, my children, why do you look at me? (Greek), from Euripides' tragedy *Medea.* Medea speaks these lines before killing her children in vengeance against her husband, who has taken a new wife. (The poem's title is spoken by the chorus.)Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A commissioner mentions the fact of weeds being thus confounded with the idea of flowers [*Barrett Browning's note*].Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, we gain our sense of the possibilities of God's love from our experience of love in the world.Return to

reference 4
- Note 5: Palm branch, symbol of victory.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Color associated with royalty and (in poetry) with blood.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *bitterly*Return to reference °
- °: *frost*Return to reference °
- °: *church*Return to reference °
- °: *shroud*Return to reference °
- °: *armored*Return to reference °

To George Sand[1]

A Desire

Thou large-brained woman and large-hearted man,
Self-called George Sand! whose soul, amid the lions
Of thy tumultuous senses, moans defiance
And answers roar for roar, as spirits can:
I would some mild miraculous thunder ran
Above the applauded circus,[2] in appliance
Of thine own nobler nature's strength and science,
Drawing two pinions, white as wings of swan,
From thy strong shoulders, to amaze the place
With holier light! that thou to woman's claim
And man's, mightst join beside the angel's grace
Of a pure genius sanctified from blame,
Till child and maiden pressed to thine embrace
To kiss upon thy lips a stainless fame.

1844

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Pen name of the French Romantic novelist Amandine-Aurore-Lucile Dudevant (1804–1876), famous for her unconventional ideas and behavior. Barrett Browning discovered Sand's writing while an invalid, "a prisoner," and asserts that Sand, together with Balzac, "kept the colour in my life." A defender of Sand's genius to less-sympathetic friends critical of Sand's morality, Barrett Browning writes to her friend Mary Russell Mitford (a novelist and dramatist) that Sand "is eloquent as a fallen angel .

. . A true woman of genius!—but of a womanhood tired of itself, and scorned by *her,* while she bears it burning above her head." Return to reference 1

- Note 2: A Roman spectacle that might include such entertainment as fights between humans and lions.Return to reference 2

To George Sand

A Recognition

True genius, but true woman! dost deny
The woman's nature with a manly scorn,
And break away the gauds° and armlets worn
By weaker women in captivity?
Ah, vain denial! that revolted cry
Is sobbed in by a woman's voice forlorn,—
Thy woman's hair, my sister, all unshorn
Floats back dishevelled strength in agony,
Disproving thy man's name: and while before
The world thou burnest in a poet-fire,
We see thy woman-heart beat evermore
Through the large flame. Beat purer, heart, and higher,
Till God unsex thee on the heavenly shore
Where unincarnate° spirits purely aspire!

1844

Notes

- °: *ornaments* Return to reference °
- °: *disembodied* Return to reference °

From Sonnets from the Portuguese

21

Say over again, and yet once over again,
That thou dost love me. Though the word repeated
Should seem "a cuckoo song,"[1] as thou dost treat it,
Remember, never to the hill or plain,
Valley and wood, without her cuckoo strain
Comes the fresh Spring in all her green completed.
Belovèd, I, amid the darkness greeted
By a doubtful spirit voice, in that doubt's pain
Cry, "Speak once more—thou lovest!" Who can fear
Too many stars, though each in heaven shall roll,
Too many flowers, though each shall crown the year?
Say thou dost love me, love me, love me—toll
The silver iterance![°]—only minding, Dear,
To love me also in silence with thy soul.

Endnotes

- Note 1: The cuckoo has a repeating call.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *repetition*Return to reference °

22

When our two souls stand up erect and strong,
Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and nigher,
Until the lengthening wings break into fire
At either curvèd point—what bitter wrong
Can the earth do to us, that we should not long
Be here contented? Think. In mounting higher,
The angels would press on us and aspire
To drop some golden orb of perfect song
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay
Rather on earth, Belovèd,—where the unfit
Contrarious moods of men recoil away
And isolate pure spirits, and permit
A place to stand and love in for a day,
With darkness and the death-hour rounding it.

32

The first time that the sun rose on thine oath
To love me, I looked forward to the moon
To slacken all those bonds which seemed too soon
And quickly tied to make a lasting troth.
Quick-loving hearts, I thought, may quickly loathe;
And, looking on myself, I seemed not one
For such man's love!—more like an out-of-tune
Worn viol, a good singer would be wroth
To spoil his song with, and which, snatched in haste,
Is laid down at the first ill-sounding note.
I did not wrong myself so, but I placed
A wrong on *thee.* For perfect strains may float
'Neath master-hands, from instruments defaced—
And great souls, at one stroke, may do and dote.

43

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

1845–47 1850

The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point[1]

I

I stand on the mark beside the shore
  Of the first white pilgrim's bended knee,
Where exile turned to ancestor,
  And God was thanked for liberty.
I have run through the night, my skin is as dark,
I bend my knee down on this mark:
  I look on the sky and the sea.

II

O pilgrim-souls, I speak to you!
  I see you come proud and slow
From the land of the spirits pale as dew
  And round me and round me ye go.
O pilgrims, I have gasped and run
All night long from the whips of one
  Who in your names works sin and woe!

III

And thus I thought that I would come
  And kneel here where ye knelt before,
And feel your souls around me hum
  In undertone to the ocean's roar;
And lift my black face, my black hand,
Here, in your names, to curse this land
  Ye blessed in freedom's, evermore.

IV

I am black, I am black,
And yet God made me, they say:
But if He did so, smiling back
He must have cast his work away
Under the feet of his white creatures,
With a look of scorn, that the dusky features
Might be trodden again to clay.

V

And yet He has made dark things
To be glad and merry as light:
There's a little dark bird sits and sings,
There's a dark stream ripples out of sight,
And the dark frogs chant in the safe morass,°
And the sweetest stars are made to pass
O'er the face of the darkest night.

VI

But *we* who are dark, we are dark!
Ah God, we have no stars!
About our souls in care and cark°
Our blackness shuts like prison-bars:
The poor souls crouch so far behind
That never a comfort can they find
By reaching through the prison-bars.

VII

Indeed we live beneath the sky,
That great smooth Hand of God stretched out
On all His children fatherly,
To save them from the dread and doubt
Which would be if, from this low place,
All opened straight up to His face
Into the grand eternity.

VIII

And still God's sunshine and His frost,
  They make us hot, they make us cold,
As if we were not black and lost;
  And the beasts and birds, in wood and fold,
Do fear and take us for very men:
Could the whip-poor-will or the cat of the glen°
  Look into my eyes and be bold?

IX

I am black, I am black!
  But, once, I laughed in girlish glee,
For one of my colour stood in the track
  Where the drivers drove, and looked at me,
And tender and full was the look he gave—
Could a slave look *so* at another slave?—
  I look at the sky and the sea.

X

And from that hour our spirits grew
  As free as if unsold, unbought:
Oh, strong enough, since we were two,
  To conquer the world, we thought.
The drivers drove us day by day;
We did not mind, we went one way,
  And no better a freedom sought.

XI

In the sunny ground between the canes,°
  He said "I love you" as he passed;
When the shingle-roof rang sharp with the rains,
  I heard how he vowed it fast:
While others shook he smiled in the hut,

As he carved me a bowl of the cocoa-nut
Through the roar of the hurricanes.

XII

I sang his name instead of a song,
Over and over I sang his name,
Upward and downward I drew it along
My various notes,—the same, the same!
I sang it low, that the slave-girls near
Might never guess, from aught they could hear,
It was only a name—a name.

XIII

I look on the sky and the sea.
We were two to love, and two to pray:
Yes, two, O God, who cried to Thee,
Though nothing didst Thou say!
Coldly Thou sat'st behind the sun:
And now I cry who am but one,
Thou wilt not speak to-day.

XIV

We were black, we were black,
We had no claim to love and bliss,
What marvel if each went to wrack?°
They wrung my cold hands out of his,
They dragged him—where? I crawled to touch
His blood's mark in the dust . . . not much,
Ye pilgrim-souls, though plain as *this!*

XV

Wrong, followed by a deeper wrong!
Mere grief's too good for such as I:

So the white men brought the shame ere long
  To strangle the sob of my agony.
They would not leave me for my dull
Wet eyes!—it was too merciful
  To let me weep pure tears and die.

XVI

I am black, I am black!
  I wore a child upon my breast,
An amulet that hung too slack,
  And, in my unrest, could not rest:
Thus we went moaning, child and mother,
One to another, one to another,
  Until all ended for the best.

XVII

For hark! I will tell you low, low,
  I am black, you see,—
And the babe who lay on my bosom so,
  Was far too white, too white for me;
As white as the ladies who scorned to pray
Beside me at church but yesterday,
  Though my tears had washed a place for my knee.

XVIII

My own, own child! I could not bear
  To look in his face, it was so white;
I covered him up with a kerchief there,
  I covered his face in close and tight:
And he moaned and struggled, as well might be,
For the white child wanted his liberty—
  Ha, ha! he wanted the master-right.

XIX

He moaned and beat with his head and feet,
   His little feet that never grew;
He struck them out, as it was meet,
   Against my heart to break it through:
I might have sung and made him mild,
But I dared not sing to the white-faced child
   The only song I knew.

XX

I pulled the kerchief very close:
   He could not see the sun, I swear,
More, then, alive, than now he does
   From between the roots of the mango . . . where?
I know where. Close! A child and mother
Do wrong to look at one another
   When one is black and one is fair.

XXI

Why, in that single glance I had
   Of my child's face, . . . I tell you all,
I saw a look that made me mad!
   The *master's* look, that used to fall
On my soul like his lash . . . or worse!
And so, to save it from my curse,
   I twisted it round in my shawl.

XXII

And he moaned and trembled from foot to head,
   He shivered from head to foot;
Till after a time, he lay instead
   Too suddenly still and mute.
I felt, beside, a stiffening cold:
I dared to lift up just a fold,
   As in lifting a leaf of the mango-fruit.

XXIII

But *my* fruit . . . ha, ha!—there, had been
(I laugh to think on 't at this hour!)
Your fine white angels (who have seen
Nearest the secret of God's power)
And plucked my fruit to make them wine,
And sucked the soul of that child of mine
As the humming-bird sucks the soul of the flower.

XXIV

Ha, ha, the trick of the angels white!
They freed the white child's spirit so.
I said not a word, but day and night
I carried the body to and fro,
And it lay on my heart like a stone, as chill.
—The sun may shine out as much as he will:
I am cold, though it happened a month ago.

XXV

From the white man's house, and the black man's hut,
I carried the little body on;
The forest's arms did round us shut,
And silence through the trees did run:
They asked no question as I went,
They stood too high for astonishment,
They could see God sit on His throne.

XXVI

My little body, kerchiefed fast,
I bore it on through the forest, on;
And when I felt it was tired at last,
I scooped a hole beneath the moon:

Through the forest-tops the angels far,
With a white sharp finger from every star,
  Did point and mock at what was done.

XXVII

Yet when it was all done aright,—
  Earth, 'twixt me and my baby, strewed,—
All, changed to black earth,—nothing white,—
  A dark child in the dark!—ensued
Some comfort, and my heart grew young;
I sate down smiling there and sung
  The song I learnt in my maidenhood.

XXVIII

And thus we two were reconciled,
  The white child and black mother, thus;
For as I sang it soft and wild,
  The same song, more melodious,
Rose from the grave whereon I sate:
It was the dead child singing that,
  To join the souls of both of us.

XXIX

I look on the sea and the sky.
  Where the pilgrims' ships first anchored lay
The free sun rideth gloriously,
  But the pilgrim-ghosts have slid away
Through the earliest streaks of the morn:
My face is black, but it glares with a scorn
  Which they dare not meet by day.

XXX

Ha!—in their stead, their hunter sons!

Ha, ha! they are on me—they hunt in a ring!
Keep off! I brave you all at once,
I throw off your eyes like snakes that sting!
You have killed the black eagle at nest, I think:
Did you ever stand still in your triumph, and shrink
From the stroke of her wounded wing?

XXXI

(Man, drop that stone you dared to lift!—)
I wish you who stand there five abreast,
Each, for his own wife's joy and gift,
A little corpse as safely at rest
As mine in the mangoes! Yes, but *she*
May keep live babies on her knee,
And sing the song she likes the best.

XXXII

I am not mad: I am black.
I see you staring in my face—
I know you staring, shrinking back,
Ye are born of the Washington-race,[2]
And this land is the free America,
And this mark on my wrist—(I prove° what I say)
Ropes tied me up here to the flogging-place.

XXXIII

You think I shrieked then? Not a sound!
I hung, as a gourd hangs in the sun;
I only cursed them all around
As softly as I might have done
My very own child: from these sands
Up to the mountains, lift your hands,
O slaves, and end what I begun!

XXXIV

Whips, curses; these must answer those!
For in this UNION you have set
Two kinds of men in adverse rows,
Each loathing each; and all forget
The seven wounds in Christ's body fair,
While HE sees gaping everywhere
Our countless wounds that pay no debt.

XXXV

Our wounds are different. Your white men
Are, after all, not gods indeed,
Nor able to make Christs again
Do good with bleeding. *We* who bleed
(Stand off!) we help not in our loss!
We are too heavy for our cross,
And fall and crush you and your seed.

XXXVI

I fall, I swoon! I look at the sky.
The clouds are breaking on my brain;
I am floated along, as if I should die
Of liberty's exquisite pain.
In the name of the white child waiting for me
In the death-dark where we may kiss and agree,
White men, I leave you all curse-free
In my broken heart's disdain!

1846 1848, 1850

Endnotes

- Note 1: Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts, where the Pilgrims landed in November 1620.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: That is, the White race (the race of George Washington, the first president of the United States).Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *marsh*Return to reference °
- °: *anxiety*Return to reference °
- °: *bobcat*Return to reference °
- °: *sugarcane*Return to reference °
- °: *ruin*Return to reference °
- °: *demonstrate*Return to reference °

Hiram Powers' Greek Slave[1]

They say Ideal Beauty cannot enter
The house of anguish. On the threshold stands
This alien Image with the shackled hands,
Called the Greek Slave: as if the artist meant her
(The passionless perfection which he lent her,
Shadowed, not darkened, where the sill expands)
To, so, confront man's crimes in different lands,
With man's ideal sense. Pierce to the centre,
Art's fiery finger! and break up ere long
The serfdom of this world. Appeal, fair stone,
From God's pure heights of beauty, against man's wrong!
Catch up, in thy divine face, not alone
East griefs, but west, and strike and shame the strong,
By thunders of white silence, overthrown.

1850

Endnotes

- Note 1: Hiram Powers (1805–1873) was an American sculptor. *Greek Slave* was his best-known piece, a life-size sculpture depicting a female nude.Return to reference 1

From Aurora Leigh

From *Book 1*

[THE EDUCATION OF AURORA LEIGH][1]

Then, land!—then, England! oh, the frosty cliffs[2]
Looked cold upon me. Could I find a home
Among those mean red houses through the fog?
And when I heard my father's language first
From alien lips which had no kiss for mine
I wept aloud, then laughed, then wept, then wept,
And some one near me said the child was mad
Through much sea-sickness. The train swept us on:
Was this my father's England? the great isle?
The ground seemed cut up from the fellowship
Of verdure, field from field,[3] as man from man;
The skies themselves looked low and positive,
As almost you could touch them with a hand,
And dared to do it they were so far off
From God's celestial crystals;[4] all things blurred
And dull and vague. Did Shakespeare and his mates
Absorb the light here?—not a hill or stone
With heart to strike a radiant colour up
Or active outline on the indifferent air.

I think I see my father's sister stand
Upon the hall-step of her country-house
To give me welcome. She stood straight and calm,
Her somewhat narrow forehead braided tight
As if for taming accidental thoughts
From possible pulses;[5] brown hair pricked with gray
By frigid use of life (she was not old,
Although my father's elder by a year),
A nose drawn sharply, yet in delicate lines;
A close mild mouth, a little soured about

The ends, through speaking unrequited loves
Or peradventure niggardly° half-truths;
Eyes of no colour,—once they might have smiled,
But never, never have forgot themselves
In smiling; cheeks, in which was yet a rose
Of perished summers, like a rose in a book,
Kept more for ruth° than pleasure,—if past bloom,
Past fading also.
She had lived, we'll say,
A harmless life, she called a virtuous life,
A quiet life, which was not life at all
(But that, she had not lived enough to know),
Between the vicar and the county squires,
The lord-lieutenant[6] looking down sometimes
From the empyrean° to assure their souls
Against chance vulgarisms, and, in the abyss,
The apothecary,[7] looked on once a year
To prove their soundness of humility.
The poor-club[8] exercised her Christian gifts
Of knitting stockings, stitching petticoats,
Because we are of one flesh, after all,
And need one flannel[9] (with a proper sense
Of difference in the quality)—and still
The book-club, guarded from your modern trick
Of shaking dangerous questions from the crease,[1]
Preserved her intellectual.° She had lived
A sort of cage-bird life, born in a cage,
Accounting that to leap from perch to perch
Was act and joy enough for any bird.
Dear heaven, how silly are the things that live
In thickets, and eat berries!
I, alas,
A wild bird scarcely fledged, was brought to her cage,
And she was there to meet me. Very kind.

Bring the clean water, give out the fresh seed.

She stood upon the steps to welcome me,
Calm, in black garb. I clung about her neck,—
Young babes, who catch at every shred of wool
To draw the new light closer, catch and cling
Less blindly. In my ears my father's word
Hummed ignorantly, as the sea in shells,
"Love, love, my child." She, black there with my grief,
Might feel my love—she was his sister once—
I clung to her. A moment she seemed moved,
Kissed me with cold lips, suffered me to cling,
And drew me feebly through the hall into
The room she sat in. There, with some strange spasm
Of pain and passion, she wrung loose my hands
Imperiously, and held me at arm's length,
And with two grey-steel naked-bladed eyes
Searched through my face,—ay, stabbed it through and through,
Through brows and cheeks and chin, as if to find
A wicked murderer in my innocent face,
If not here, there perhaps. Then, drawing breath,
She struggled for her ordinary calm—
And missed it rather,—told me not to shrink,
As if she had told me not to lie or swear,—
"She loved my father and would love me too
As long as I deserved it." Very kind.

I understood her meaning afterward;
She thought to find my mother in my face,
And questioned it for that. For she, my aunt,
Had loved my father truly, as she could,
And hated, with the gall of gentle souls,

My Tuscan[2] mother who had fooled away
A wise man from wise courses, a good man
From obvious duties, and, depriving her,
His sister, of the household precedence,
Had wronged his tenants, robbed his native land,
And made him mad, alike by life and death,
In love and sorrow. She had pored° for years
What sort of woman could be suitable
To her sort of hate, to entertain it with,
And so, her very curiosity
Became hate too, and all the idealism
She ever used in life was used for hate,
Till hate, so nourished, did exceed at last
The love from which it grew, in strength and heat,
And wrinkled her smooth conscience with a sense
Of disputable virtue (say not, sin)
When Christian doctrine was enforced at church.

And thus my father's sister was to me
My mother's hater. From that day she did
Her duty to me (I appreciate it
In her own word as spoken to herself),
Her duty, in large measure, well pressed out
But measured always. She was generous, bland,
More courteous than was tender, gave me still
The first place,—as if fearful that God's saints
Would look down suddenly and say "Herein
You missed a point, I think, through lack of love."
Alas, a mother never is afraid
Of speaking angerly to any child,
Since love, she knows, is justified of love.
And I, I was a good child on the whole,
A meek and manageable child. Why not?
I did not live, to have the faults of life:
There seemed more true life in my father's grave
Than in all England. Since *that* threw me off

Who fain would cleave (his latest will, they say,
Consigned me to his land), I only thought
Of lying quiet there where I was thrown
Like sea-weed on the rocks, and suffering her
To prick me to a pattern with her pin,[3]
Fibre from fibre, delicate leaf from leaf,
And dry out from my drowned anatomy
The last sea-salt left in me.
So it was.
I broke the copious curls upon my head
In braids, because she liked smooth-ordered hair.
I left off saying my sweet Tuscan words
Which still at any stirring of the heart
Came up to float across the English phrase
As lilies (*Bene* or *Che che*[4]), because
She liked my father's child to speak his tongue.
I learnt the collects[5] and the catechism,
The creeds, from Athanasius back to Nice,[6]
The Articles, the Tracts *against* the times[7]
(By no means Buonaventure's "Prick of Love"[8]),
And various popular synopses of
Inhuman doctrines never taught by John,[9]
Because she liked instructed piety.
I learnt my complement of classic French
(Kept pure of Balzac and neologism[1])
And German also, since she liked a range
Of liberal education,—tongues,° not books.
I learnt a little algebra, a little
Of the mathematics,—brushed with extreme flounce[2]
The circle of the sciences, because
She misliked women who are frivolous.
I learnt the royal genealogies
Of Oviedo,[3] the internal laws
Of the Burmese empire,—by how many feet

Mount Chimborazo outsoars Teneriffe,[4]
What navigable river joins itself
To Lara,[5] and what census of the year five
Was taken at Klagenfurt,[6]—because she liked
A general insight into useful facts.
I learnt much music,—such as would have been
As quite impossible in Johnson's day[7]
As still it might be wished—fine sleights of hand
And unimagined fingering, shuffling off
The hearer's soul through hurricanes of notes
To a noisy Tophet;° and I drew . . . costumes
From French engravings, nereids° neatly draped
(With smirks of simmering godship): I washed in[8]
Landscapes from nature (rather say, washed out).
I danced the polka and Cellarius,[9]
Spun glass, stuffed birds, and modeled flowers in wax,
Because she liked accomplishments in girls.
I read a score of books on womanhood
To prove, if women do not think at all,
They may teach thinking (to a maiden aunt
Or else the author),—books that boldly assert
Their right of comprehending husband's talk
When not too deep, and even of answering
With pretty "may it please you," or "so it is,"—
Their rapid insight and fine aptitude,
Particular worth and general missionariness,
As long as they keep quiet by the fire
And never say "no" when the world says "ay,"
For that is fatal,—their angelic reach
Of virtue, chiefly used to sit and darn,
And fatten household sinners,—their, in brief,
Potential faculty in everything
Of abdicating power in it: she owned
She liked a woman to be womanly,

And English women, she thanked God and sighed
(Some people always sigh in thanking God),
Were models to the universe. And last
I learnt cross-stitch,[1] because she did not like
To see me wear the night with empty hands
A-doing nothing. So, my shepherdess
Was something after all (the pastoral saints
Be praised for't), leaning lovelorn with pink eyes
To match her shoes, when I mistook the silks;
Her head uncrushed by that round weight of hat
So strangely similar to the tortoise shell
Which slew the tragic poet.[2]
By the way,
The works of women are symbolical.
We sew, sew, prick our fingers, dull our sight,
Producing what? A pair of slippers, sir,
To put on when you're weary—or a stool
To stumble over and vex you . . . "curse that stool!"
Or else at best, a cushion, where you lean
And sleep, and dream of something we are not
But would be for your sake. Alas, alas!
This hurts most, this—that, after all, we are paid
The worth of our work, perhaps.
In looking down
Those years of education (to return)
I wonder if Brinvilliers suffered more
In the water-torture[3] . . . flood succeeding flood
To drench the incapable throat and split the veins . . .
Than I did. Certain of your feebler souls
Go out° in such a process; many pine
To a sick, inodorous light; my own endured:
I had relations in the Unseen, and drew
The elemental nutriment and heat
From nature, as earth feels the sun at nights,

Or as a babe sucks surely in the dark.
I kept the life thrust on me, on the outside
Of the inner life with all its ample room
For heart and lungs, for will and intellect,
Inviolable by conventions. God,
I thank thee for that grace of thine!
At first
I felt no life which was not patience,—did
The thing she bade me, without heed to a thing
Beyond it, sat in just the chair she placed,
With back against the window, to exclude
The sight of the great lime-tree on the lawn,[4]
Which seemed to have come on purpose from the woods
To bring the house a message,—ay, and walked
Demurely in her carpeted low rooms,
As if I should not, harkening my own steps,
Misdoubt° I was alive. I read her books,
Was civil to her cousin, Romney Leigh,
Gave ear to her vicar, tea to her visitors,
And heard them whisper, when I changed a cup
(I blushed for joy at that),—"The Italian child,
For all her blue eyes and her quiet ways,
Thrives ill in England: she is paler yet
Than when we came the last time; she will die."

Endnotes

- Note 1: Aurora Leigh, the only child of an Italian mother and an English father, is raised in Italy by her father after her mother's death when Aurora is four years old. When she is thirteen her father also dies, and the orphaned girl is sent to live in England with her father's sister, who is to be responsible for the girl's education.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The white chalk cliffs at Dover.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: English fields were separated from each other by hedgerows.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Perhaps a reference to the ancient notion that the sky was composed of several crystalline spheres orbiting the earth.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, pulsation in her temples from excitement.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Governor of the county.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Pharmacist, who in England at the time could prescribe as well as sell medicine.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Club devoted to making things for the poor.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, flannel petticoat.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The fold between two pages of a book, which had to be cut to open the pages. Presumably, modern books were more apt to reveal dangerous material when the crease was cut.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: From Tuscany, a region in central Italy.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: As in embroidery.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: No, no, indeed (Italian). "*Bene*"*:* it is well (Italian).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Seasonal opening prayers in the Anglican Church service.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Articles of Christian faith such as those proclaimed by Athanasius, an Egyptian theologian of the 4th century C.E., and at the early Church council held at Nicaea in the same era.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In the 1830s leaders of the conservative High Church party had published *Tracts for the Times,* which argued against efforts by liberals to modernize the Anglican Church. Aurora's version of the title is hence ironic. "Articles": the thirty-nine articles are the principles of faith of the Church of England.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: St. Bonaventure's doctrine that the power of the heart to love leads to higher illumination than the power of the mind

to reason.Return to reference 8

- Note 9: That is, the author of the Gospel.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A new word or expression. Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850), a French novelist whose realism made him improper reading for a young English lady of the 19th century.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: An ornamental edge to a skirt. "Extreme": outermost.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Spanish historian (16th century), who wrote a book on the genealogies of Spanish noblemen.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A mountain in the Canary Islands. Mount Chimborazo is one of the highest peaks of the Andes.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A town in Spain on the river Arlanza. Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A town in Austria.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Allusion to the story about Samuel Johnson (1709–1784), who, when informed of the difficulty of a piece of music a young lady was playing, replied, "I would it had been impossible."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: As in painting with watercolors.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A kind of waltz.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, embroidery.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: According to tradition, the Greek playwright Aeschylus was killed by an eagle who, mistaking his bald head for a stone, dropped a tortoise on it to break the shell.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Marie Marguerite, Marquise de Brinvilliers, a celebrated criminal who was beheaded in 1676, was tortured by having water forced down her throat.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Compare Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" (1800), in which the lime tree becomes the vehicle of a realization that Nature never deserts the wise and pure even when they seem to be cut off from her most beautiful vistas.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *miserly* Return to reference °
- °: *remorse* Return to reference °
- °: *highest heaven* Return to reference °
- °: *intellectual gifts* Return to reference °
- °: *pored over* Return to reference °
- °: *languages* Return to reference °
- °: *hell* Return to reference °
- °: *sea nymphs* Return to reference °
- °: *die* Return to reference °
- °: *doubt* Return to reference °

From *Book 2*

[AURORA'S ASPIRATIONS][5]

Times followed one another. Came a morn
I stood upon the brink of twenty years,
And looked before and after, as I stood
Woman and artist,—either incomplete,
Both credulous of completion. There I held
The whole creation in my little cup,
And smiled with thirsty lips before I drank
"Good health to you and me, sweet neighbour mine,
And all these peoples."
I was glad, that day;
The June was in me, with its multitudes
Of nightingales all singing in the dark,
And rosebuds reddening where the calyx[6] split.
I felt so young, so strong, so sure of God!
So glad, I could not choose be very wise!
And, old at twenty, was inclined to pull
My childhood backward in a childish jest
To see the face of't once more, and farewell!
In which fantastic mood I bounded forth
At early morning,—would not wait so long
As even to snatch my bonnet by the strings,
But, brushing a green trail across the lawn
With my gown in the dew, took will and away
Among the acacias of the shrubberies,
To fly my fancies in the open air
And keep° my birthday, till my aunt awoke
To stop good dreams. Meanwhile I murmured on
As honeyed bees keep humming to themselves,
"The worthiest poets have remained uncrowned
Till death has bleached their foreheads to the bone;
And so with me it must be unless I prove
Unworthy of the grand adversity,

And certainly I would not fail so much.
What, therefore, if I crown myself to-day
In sport, not pride, to learn the feel of it,
Before my brows be numbed as Dante's own
To all the tender pricking of such leaves?
Such leaves! what leaves?"
I pulled the branches down
To choose from.
"Not the bay![7] I choose no bay
(The fates deny us if we are overbold),
Nor myrtle—which means chiefly love; and love
Is something awful which one dares not touch
So early o' mornings. This verbena strains
The point of passionate fragrance; and hard by,
This guelder-rose,° at far too slight a beck
Of the wind, will toss about her flower-apples.
Ah—there's my choice,—that ivy on the wall,
That headlong ivy! not a leaf will grow
But thinking of a wreath. Large leaves, smooth leaves,
Serrated like my vines, and half as green.
I like such ivy, bold to leap a height
'Twas strong to climb; as good to grow on graves
As twist about a thyrsus;[8] pretty too
(And that's not ill) when twisted round a comb."
Thus speaking to myself, half singing it,
Because some thoughts are fashioned like a bell
To ring with once being touched, I drew a wreath
Drenched, blinding me with dew, across my brow,
And fastening it behind so, turning faced
. . . My public!—cousin Romney—with a mouth
Twice graver than his eyes.
I stood there fixed,—
My arms up, like the caryatid,[9] sole

Of some abolished temple, helplessly
Persistent in a gesture which derides
A former purpose. Yet my blush was flame,
As if from flax, not stone.
"Aurora Leigh,
The earliest of Auroras!"[1]
Hand stretched out
I clasped, as shipwrecked men will clasp a hand,
Indifferent to the sort of palm. The tide
Had caught me at my pastime, writing down
My foolish name too near upon the sea
Which drowned me with a blush as foolish. "You,
My cousin!"
The smile died out in his eyes
And dropped upon his lips, a cold dead weight,
For just a moment, "Here's a book I found!
No name writ on it—poems, by the form;
Some Greek upon the margin,—lady's Greek
Without the accents.[2] Read it? Not a word.
I saw at once the thing had witchcraft in't,
Whereof the reading calls up dangerous spirits:
I rather bring it to the witch."
"My book.
You found it" . . .
"In the hollow by the stream
That beech leans down into—of which you said
The Oread in it has a Naiad's[3] heart
And pines for waters."
"Thank you."
"Thanks to *you*
My cousin! that I have seen you not too much
Witch, scholar, poet, dreamer, and the rest,
To be a woman also."
With a glance
The smile rose in his eyes again and touched

The ivy on my forehead, light as air.
I answered gravely "Poets needs must be
Or° men or women—more's the pity."
"Ah,
But men, and still less women, happily,
Scarce need be poets. Keep to the green wreath,
Since even dreaming of the stone and bronze
Brings headaches, pretty cousin, and defiles
The clean white morning dresses."
"So you judge!
Because I love the beautiful I must
Love pleasure chiefly, and be overcharged
For ease and whiteness! well, you know the world,
And only miss your cousin, 'tis not much.
But learn this; I would rather take my part
With God's Dead, who afford to walk in white
Yet spread His glory, than keep quiet here
And gather up my feet from even a step
For fear to soil my gown in so much dust.
I choose to walk at all risks.—Here, if heads
That hold a rhythmic thought, must ache perforce,
For my part I choose headaches,—and to-day's
My birthday,"
"Dear Aurora, choose instead
To cure them. You have balsams."°
"I perceive.
The headache is too noble for my sex.
You think the heartache would sound decenter,
Since that's the woman's special, proper ache,
And altogether tolerable, except
To a woman."

Endnotes

- Note 5: Stifled by her aunt's oppressive conventionality, Aurora has found three sources of comfort and inspiration: poetic aspirations, fostered by the discovery of her father's library; the beauty of the natural world; and the intellectual companionship of her cousin Romney Leigh, an idealistic young man troubled by the misery of the poor and inspired by contemporary notions of social reform.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The protective outer leaves covering a flower or bud.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Laurel, associated with poetry and prophecy by the ancient Greeks, who also crowned the athletic victors in the Pythian games with a laurel wreath.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Staff twined with ivy that was carried, according to Greek myth, by Dionysus, god of wine and fertility.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Classical column in the form of a draped female figure.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Dawns; from Aurora, Roman goddess of the dawn.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Romney is gently mocking Aurora for her apparent ignorance of the complex rules of classical Greek accentuation.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Water nymph's. "Oread": tree nymph.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *observe*Return to reference °
- °: *cranberry bush*Return to reference °
- °: *either*Return to reference °
- °: *soothing cures*Return to reference °

[AURORA'S REJECTION OF ROMNEY][4]

There he glowed on me
With all his face and eyes. "No other help?"
Said he—"no more than so?"
"What help?" I asked.
"You'd scorn my help,—as Nature's self, you say,
Has scorned to put her music in my mouth
Because a woman's. Do you now turn round
And ask for what a woman cannot give?"

"For what she only can, I turn and ask,"
He answered, catching up my hands in his,
And dropping on me from his high-eaved brow
The full weight of his soul,—"I ask for love,
And that, she can; for life in fellowship
Through bitter duties—that, I know she can;
For wifehood—will she?"
"Now," I said, "may God
Be witness 'twixt us two!" and with the word,
Meseemed[5] I floated into a sudden light
Above his stature,—"am I proved too weak
To stand alone, yet strong enough to bear
Such leaners on my shoulder? poor to think,
Yet rich enough to sympathise with thought?
Incompetent to sing, as blackbirds can,
Yet competent to love, like HIM?"
I paused;
Perhaps I darkened, as the lighthouse will
That turns upon the sea. "It's always so.
Anything does for a wife."
"Aurora, dear,
And dearly honoured,"—he pressed in at once
With eager utterance,—"you translate me ill.

I do not contradict my thought of you
Which is most reverent, with another thought
Found less so. If your sex is weak for art
(And I, who said so, did but honour you
By using truth in courtship), it is strong
For life and duty. Place your fecund heart
In mine, and let us blossom for the world
That wants love's colour in the grey of time.
My talk, meanwhile, is arid to you, ay,
Since all my talk can only set you where
You look down coldly on the arena-heaps
Of headless bodies, shapeless, indistinct!
The Judgment-Angel scarce would find his way
Through such a heap of generalised distress
To the individual man with lips and eyes,
Much less Aurora. Ah, my sweet, come down,
And hand in hand we'll go where yours shall touch
These victims, one by one! till, one by one,
The formless, nameless trunk of every man
Shall seem to wear a head with hair you know,
And every woman catch your mother's face
To melt you into passion."
"I am a girl,"
I answered slowly; "you do well to name
My mother's face. Though far too early, alas,
God's hand did interpose 'twixt it and me,
I know so much of love as used to shine
In that face and another. Just so much;
No more indeed at all. I have not seen
So much love since, I pray you pardon me,
As answers even to make a marriage with
In this cold land of England. What you love
Is not a woman, Romney, but a cause:
You want a helpmate, not a mistress, sir,
A wife to help your ends,—in her no end.
Your cause is noble, your ends excellent,

But I, being most unworthy of these and that,
Do otherwise conceive of love. Farewell."

"Farewell, Aurora? you reject me thus?"
He said.
"Sir, you were married long ago.
You have a wife already whom you love,
Your social theory. Bless you both, I say.
For my part, I am scarcely meek enough
To be the handmaid of a lawful spouse.
Do I look a Hagar,[6] think you?"
"So you jest."

"Nay, so, I speak in earnest," I replied.
"You treat of° marriage too much like, at least,
A chief apostle: you would bear with you
A wife . . . a sister . . . shall we speak it out?
A sister of charity."
"Then, must it be
Indeed farewell? And was I so far wrong
In hope and in illusion, when I took
The woman to be nobler than the man,
Yourself the noblest woman, in the use
And comprehension of what love is,—love,
That generates the likeness of itself
Through all heroic duties? so far wrong,
In saying bluntly, venturing truth on love,
'Come, human creature, love and work with me,'—
Instead of 'Lady, thou art wondrous fair,
'And, where the Graces[7] walk before, the Muse
'Will follow at the lightning of their eyes,
'And where the Muse walks, lovers need to creep:
'Turn round and love me, or I die of love.' "

With quiet indignation I broke in.
"You misconceive the question like a man,

Who sees a woman as the complement
Of his sex merely. You forget too much
That every creature, female as the male,
Stands single in responsible act and thought
As also in birth and death. Whoever says
To a loyal woman, 'Love and work with me,'
Will get fair answers if the work and love,
Being good themselves, are good for her—the best
She was born for. Women of a softer mood,
Surprised by men when scarcely awake to life,
Will sometimes only hear the first word, love,
And catch up with it any kind of work,
Indifferent, so that dear love go with it.
I do not blame such women, though, for love,
They pick much oakum;[8] earth's fanatics make
Too frequently heaven's saints. But *me* your work
Is not the best for,—nor your love the best,
Nor able to commend the kind of work
For love's sake merely. Ah, you force me, sir,
To be overbold in speaking of myself:
I too have my vocation,—work to do,
The heavens and earth have set me since I changed
My father's face for theirs, and, though your world
Were twice as wretched as you represent,
Most serious work, most necessary work
As any of the economists'. Reform,
Make trade a Christian possibility,
And individual right no general wrong;
Wipe out earth's furrows of the Thine and Mine,
And leave one green for men to play at bowls,[9]
With innings for them all! . . . What then, indeed,
If mortals are not greater by the head
Than any of their prosperities? what then,
Unless the artist keep up open roads
Betwixt the seen and unseen,—bursting through

The best of your conventions with his best,
The speakable, imaginable best
God bids him speak, to prove what lies beyond
Both speech and imagination? A starved man
Exceeds a fat beast: we'll not barter, sir,
The beautiful for barley.—And, even so,
I hold you will not compass your poor ends
Of barley-feeding and material ease,
Without a poet's individualism
To work your universal. It takes a soul,
To move a body: it takes a high-souled man,
To move the masses, even to a cleaner stye:
It takes the ideal, to blow a hair's-breadth off
The dust of the actual.—Ah, your Fouriers[1] failed,
Because not poets enough to understand
That life develops from within.——For me,
Perhaps I am not worthy, as you say,
Of work like this: perhaps a woman's soul
Aspires, and not creates: yet we aspire,
And yet I'll try out your perhapses, sir,
And if I fail . . . why, burn me up my straw[2]
Like other false works—I'll not ask for grace;
Your scorn is better, cousin Romney. I
Who love my art, would never wish it lower
To suit my stature. I may love my art.
You'll grant that even a woman may love art,
Seeing that to waste true love on anything
Is womanly, past question."

Endnotes

- Note 4:
  Romney and Aurora have been arguing about whether art, particularly a young woman's poetry, is useful in a world that, according to Romney, is full of human suffering. Romney claims

that women have no ability to generalize from their personal experiences and are, therefore, doomed to be trivial poets and ineffectual social reformers. Aurora is quick to agree that to be merely an inferior poet would be intolerable to her, but while she admires Romney's lofty concern for humanity, she remains untempted to join forces with him.
Return to reference 4

- Note 5: It seemed to me.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In Genesis 16 Sarah's maidservant, who bore a child, Ishmael, by Sarah's husband, Abraham.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In classical mythology goddesses who personified beauty and charm.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Fiber derived by untwisting (picking) old rope, a task frequently assigned to workhouse inmates.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A game played on a smooth lawn with weighted wooden balls.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, Utopian thinkers. François-Marie-Charles Fourier (1772–1837) was a French political theorist who advocated communal property as a basis for social harmony.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, destroy my poetry. See 1 Corinthians 3:12–15.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *talk about*Return to reference °

From *Book 5*

[POETS AND THE PRESENT AGE]

The critics say that epics have died out
With Agamemnon and the goat-nursed gods;[3]
I'll not believe it. I could never deem,
As Payne Knight[4] did (the mythic mountaineer
Who travelled higher than he was born to live,
And showed sometimes the goitre[5] in his throat
Discoursing of an image seen through fog),
That Homer's heroes measured twelve feet high.
They were but men:—his Helen's hair turned grey
Like any plain Miss Smith's who wears a front;[6]
And Hector's infant whimpered at a plume[7]
As yours last Friday at a turkey-cock.
All actual heroes are essential men,
And all men possible heroes: every age,
Heroic in proportions, double-faced,
Looks backward and before, expects a morn
And claims an epos.°
Ay, but every age
Appears to souls who live in't (ask Carlyle)[8]
Most unheroic. Ours, for instance, ours:
The thinkers scout it,° and the poets abound
Who scorn to touch it with a finger-tip:
A pewter age,[9]—mixed metal, silver-washed;
An age of scum, spooned off the richer past,
An age of patches for old gaberdines,°
An age of mere transition,[1] meaning nought
Except that what succeeds° must shame it quite
If God please. That's wrong thinking, to my mind,
And wrong thoughts make poor poems.
Every age,

Through being beheld too close, is ill-discerned
By those who have not lived past it. We'll suppose
Mount Athos carved, as Alexander schemed,
To some colossal statue of a man.[2]
The peasants, gathering brushwood in his ear,
Had guessed as little as the browsing goats
Of form or feature of humanity
Up there,—in fact, had travelled five miles off
Or ere the giant image broke on them,
Full human profile, nose and chin distinct,
Mouth, muttering rhythms of silence up the sky
And fed at evening with the blood of suns;
Grand torso,—hand, that flung perpetually
The largesse of a silver river down
To all the country pastures. 'Tis even thus
With times we live in,—evermore too great
To be apprehended near.
But poets should
Exert a double vision; should have eyes
To see near things as comprehensively
As if afar they took their point of sight,
And distant things as intimately deep
As if they touched them. Let us strive for this.
I do distrust the poet who discerns
No character or glory in his times,
And trundles back his soul five hundred years,
Past moat and drawbridge, into a castle-court,
To sing—oh, not of lizard or of toad
Alive i' the ditch there,—'twere excusable,
But of some black chief, half knight, half sheep-lifter,
°
Some beauteous dame, half chattel and half queen,
As dead as must be, for the greater part,
The poems made on their chivalric bones;
And that's no wonder: death inherits death.

Nay, if there's room for poets in this world
A little overgrown (I think there is),
Their sole work is to represent the age,
Their age, not Charlemagne's,[3]—this live, throbbing age,
That brawls, cheats, maddens, calculates, aspires,
And spends more passion, more heroic heat,
Betwixt the mirrors of its drawing-rooms,
Than Roland[4] with his knights at Roncesvalles.
To flinch from modern varnish, coat or flounce,
Cry out for togas and the picturesque,
Is fatal,—foolish too. King Arthur's self
Was commonplace to Lady Guenever;
And Camelot to minstrels seemed as flat
As Fleet Street[5] to our poets.
Never flinch,
But still, unscrupulously epic, catch
Upon the burning lava of a song
The full-veined, heaving, double-breasted Age:
That, when the next shall come, the men of that
May touch the impress° with reverent hand, and say
"Behold,—behold the paps° we all have sucked!
This bosom seems to beat still, or at least
It sets ours beating: this is living art,
Which thus presents and thus records true life."

1853–56 1857

Endnotes

- Note 3: Zeus, the ruler of the ancient Greek gods, was nursed by a goat. Agamemnon was the commander of the Greeks in the Trojan War.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Richard Payne Knight (1750–1824), a classical philologist who claimed that Lord Elgin had wasted his labor taking the marble friezes from the Parthenon in Greece to

England because the marbles were not all Greek.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: A disease often contracted in high mountain areas because of the low iodine content of the water.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A piece of false hair worn over the forehead by women.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In the *Iliad,* book 6, the Trojan hero Hector reaches for his infant son, but the child clings to his nurse, frightened of his father's helmet and crest.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: In *Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841), Carlyle argues that the present age needs a renewed perception of the heroic.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Allusion to the convention, which originates in Hesiod (Greek poet, ca. 8th century b.c.e), of describing civilization's decline through a succession of ages named for increasingly less precious materials: the Golden Age, the Silver Age, the Bronze Age.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In *The Spirit of the Age* (1831), John Stuart Mill calls the present age "an age of transition."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Deinocrates, a Macedonian architect (4th century B.C.E.), is said to have suggested to Alexander the Great that Mount Athos be carved into the statue of a conqueror with a city in his left hand and a basin in his right, where all the waters of the region could be collected and used to water the pasturelands below.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Frankish conqueror (742–814), who created a European empire.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Legendary medieval hero, whose adventures are told in the epic poem *Chanson de Roland* (11th century); his last battle is fought at Roncesvalles, a Spanish village.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A center for bookshops and newspaper and publishing offices in London.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *epic poem*Return to reference °
- °: *dismiss it scornfully*Return to reference °
- °: *coats*Return to reference °
- °: *follows*Return to reference °
- °: *sheep stealer*Return to reference °
- °: *impression*Return to reference °
- °: *breasts*Return to reference °

A Curse for a Nation[1]

PROLOGUE

I heard an angel speak last night,
And he said, "Write!
Write a nation's curse for me,
And send it over the western sea."

I faltered, taking up the word—
"Not so, my lord!
If curses must be, choose another
To send thy curse against my brother.

"For I am bound by gratitude,
In love and blood,
To brothers of mine across the sea,
Who have stretched out kindly hands to me."

"Therefore," the voice said, "shalt thou write
My curse to-night!
From the summits of love a curse is driven,
As lightning from the tops of heaven."

"Not so!" I answered. "Evermore
My heart is sore
For my own land's sins! for the little feet
Of children bleeding along the street.

"For parked-up honours, that gainsay
The right of way!
For almsgiving through a door that is
Not open enough for two friends to kiss.[2]

"For an oligarchic parliament,
And classes rent.[3]
What curse to another land assign,

When heavy-souled for the sins of mine?”

“Therefore,” the voice said, “shalt thou write
My curse to-night!
Because thou hast strength to see and hate
An ill thing done within thy gate.”[4]

“Not so!” I answered once again—
“To curse, choose men;
For I, a woman, have only known
How the heart melts and the tears run down.”

“Therefore,” the voice said, “shalt thou write
My curse to-night!
There are women who weep and curse, I say,
(And no one marvels) night and day.

“And thou shalt take their part to-night—
Weep and write!
A curse from the depths of womanhood,
Is very salt, and bitter, and good.”

So thus I wrote, and mourned indeed,
What all may read;
And thus, as was enjoined on me,
I send it over the western sea.

The Curse

I

Because ye have broken your own chain
With the strain
Of brave men climbing a nation’s height,
Yet thence bear down with chain and thong
On the souls of others,—for this wrong

This is the curse—write!

Because yourselves are standing straight
In the state
Of Freedom's foremost acolyte,
Yet keep calm footing all the time
On writhing bondslaves,—for this crime
This is the curse—write!

Because ye prosper in God's name,
With a claim
To honour in the whole world's sight,[5]
Yet do the fiend's work perfectly
On babes and women—for this lie[6]
This is the curse—write!

II

Ye shall watch while kings conspire
Round the people's smouldering fire,
And, warm for your part,
Shall never dare—O shame!
To utter the thought into flame
Which burns at your heart.
This is the curse—write!

Ye shall watch while nations strive
With the bloodhounds—die or survive,—
Drop faint from their jaws,
Or throttle them backward to death,
And only under your breath
Shall ye bless the cause.[7]
This is the curse—write!

Ye shall watch while strong men draw
The nets of feudal law

To strangle the weak;
Ye shall count the sin for a sin,
But your soul shall be sadder within
Than the word which ye speak.
This is the curse—write!

Ye shall watch while rich men dine,[8]
And poor men hunger and pine
For one crust in seven;
But shall quail from the signs which present
God's judgment as imminent
To make it all even.
This is the curse—write!

When good men are praying erect
That Christ may avenge his elect
And deliver the earth,
The prayer in your ears, said low,
Shall sound like the tramp of a foe
That's driving you forth.
This is the curse—write!

When wise men give you their praise,
They shall pause in the heat of the phrase,
And sicken afar;[9]
When ye boast your own charters kept true,
Ye shall blush!—for the thing which ye do
Derides what ye are.
This is the curse—write!

When fools write taunts on your gate,
Your scorn ye shall somewhat abate
As ye look o'er the wall;
For your conscience, tradition, and name
Strike back with a deadlier blame[1]
Than the worst of them all.

This is the curse—write!

Go! while ill deeds shall be done,
Plant on your flag in the sun
  Beside the ill-doers;
And shrink from clenching the curse
Of the witnessing universe,
  With a curse of yours!
    This is the curse—write!

1854 1856

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  "Curse" was published in two forms during Barrett Browning's lifetime. It first appeared in 1856 in the American abolitionist magazine *The Liberty Bell*, as a response to the American "Ostend Manifesto" of 1854. (The Ostend Manifesto advocated U.S. seizure of Cuba from Spain in order to expand U.S. slave territory.) It was reprinted in 1860 in the poet's *Poems before Congress*, where it was widely understood—and Barrett Browning claimed, misunderstood—as a critique of British failure to support the cause of Italian unification. There are many relatively minor differences between the two versions; the major differences are noted below.
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The 1860 version inserts an additional stanza:

  For love of freedom which abates
    Beyond the Straits:
  For patriot virtue starved to vice on
  Self-praise, self-interest, and suspicion:

  Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The 1860 version of this line: "And bribes well-meant."Return to reference 3

- Note 4: The 1860 version of this line: “A foul thing done *within* thy gate.”Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The 1860 version of this line: “To honor in the old world’s sight,”Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The 1860 version of this line: “In strangling martyrs,—for this lie”Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The 1860 version of this line: “Shall favor the cause.”Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The 1860 version cuts this stanza as well as the following one.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The 1860 version of this line: “As if carried too far.”Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The 1860 version of this line: “Explode with a deadlier blame”Return to reference 1

Mother and Poet[1]

(Turin, After News from Gaeta, 1861)

1

DEAD! One of them shot by the sea in the east,
And one of them shot in the west by the sea.
Dead! both my boys! When you sit at the feast
And are wanting a great song for Italy free,
Let none look at *me!*

2

Yet I was a poetess only last year,
And good at my art, for a woman, men said;
But *this* woman, *this,* who is agonised here,
—The east sea and west sea rhyme on in her head
For ever instead.

3

What art can a woman be good at? Oh, vain!
What art *is* she good at, but hurting her breast
With the milk-teeth of babes, and a smile at the pain?
Ah boys, how you hurt! you were strong as you pressed,
And I proud, by that test.

4

What art's for a woman? To hold on her knees
Both darlings! to feel all their arms round her throat,
Cling, strangle a little! to sew by degrees
And 'broider the long-clothes° and neat little coat;
To dream and to doat.

5

To teach them . . . It stings there! *I* made them indeed
Speak plain the word *country. I* taught them, no doubt,
That a country's a thing men should die for at need.
I prated of liberty, rights, and about
The tyrant cast out.

6

And when their eyes flashed . . . O my beautiful eyes! . . .
I exulted; nay, let them go forth at the wheels
Of the guns, and denied not. But then the surprise
When one sits quite alone! Then one weeps, then one kneels!
God, how the house feels!

7

At first, happy news came, in gay letters moiled°
With my kisses,—of camp-life and glory, and how
They both loved me; and, soon coming home to be spoiled
In return would fan off every fly from my brow
With their green laurel-bough.[2]

8

Then was triumph at Turin: "Ancona was free!"
And some one came out of the cheers in the street,
With a face pale as stone, to say something to me.
My Guido was dead! I fell down at his feet,
While they cheered in the street.

9

I bore it; friends soothed me; my grief looked sublime
As the ransom of Italy. One boy remained
To be leant on and walked with, recalling the time
When the first grew immortal, while both of us strained
To the height he had gained.

10

And letters still came, shorter, sadder, more strong,
Writ now but in one hand, "I was not to faint,—
One loved me for two—would be with me ere long:
And *Viva l'Italia!—he* died for, our saint,
Who forbids our complaint."

11

My Nanni would add, "he was safe, and aware
Of a presence that turned off the balls,° —was imprest
It was Guido himself, who knew what I could bear,
And how 'twas impossible, quite dispossessed

To live on for the rest."[3]

12

On which, without pause, up the telegraph line
Swept smoothly the next news from Gaeta:—*Shot.*
Tell his mother. Ah, ah, "his," "their" mother,—not
"mine,"
No voice says "*My* mother" again to me. What!
You think Guido forgot?

13

Are souls straight° so happy that, dizzy with Heaven,
They drop earth's affections, conceive not of woe?
I think not. Themselves were too lately forgiven
Through THAT Love and Sorrow which reconciled so
The Above and Below.

14

O Christ of the five wounds, who look'dst through
the dark
To the face of thy mother! consider, I pray,
How we common mothers stand desolate, mark,
Whose sons, not being Christs, die with eyes
turned away
And no last word to say!

15

Both boys dead? but that's out of nature. We all
Have been patriots, yet each house must always
keep one.
'Twere imbecile, hewing out roads to a wall;

And, when Italy's made, for what end is it done
If we have not a son?

16

Ah, ah, ah! when Gaeta's taken, what then?
When the fair wicked queen[4] sits no more at her sport
Of the fire-balls of death crashing souls out of men?
When the guns of Cavalli[5] with final retort
Have cut the game short?

17

When Venice and Rome keep their new jubilee,[6]
When your flag takes all heaven for its white, green, and red,
When *you* have your country from mountain to sea,
When King Victor has Italy's crown on his head,
(And *I* have my Dead)—

18

What then? Do not mock me. Ah, ring your bells low,
And burn your lights faintly! *My* country is *there,*
Above the star pricked by the last peak of snow:
My Italy's THERE, with my brave civic Pair,
To disfranchise despair!

19

Forgive me. Some women bear children in strength,
And bite back the cry of their pain in self-scorn;
But the birth-pangs of nations will wring us at length
Into wail such as this—and we sit on forlorn

When the man-child is born.

20

Dead! One of them shot by the sea in the east,
And one of them shot in the west by the sea.
Both! both my boys! If in keeping the feast
You want a great song for your Italy free,
Let none look at *me!*

1861 1862

Endnotes

- Note 1: The speaker is the Italian poet and patriot Laura Savio of Turin, both of whose sons were killed in the struggle for the unification of Italy—one in the attack on the fortress at Ancona, the other at the siege of Gaeta, the last stronghold of the Neapolitan government.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A laurel crown is the conventional mark of a poet's fame.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, that she could survive if both sons died.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Maria of Bavaria, wife of Francis II, the last ruler of the Neapolitan government, who retreated to Gaeta.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The general commanding the siege of Gaeta. Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The celebration when they too will have been united with the rest of Italy under King Victor Emmanuel II (1820–1878; reigned, 1861–78). In 1861, when the poem was written, they were the two cities that were still independent of the new state.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *infant's clothing*Return to reference °

- °: *moistened* Return to reference °
- °: *cannonballs* Return to reference °
- °: *immediately* Return to reference °

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON
1809–1892

In his own lifetime, Tennyson was the most popular of poets; after 1850, his works occupied a significant space on the bookshelves of almost every family of readers in England and the United States. This popularity came gradually: his first volume of poetry, *Poems by Two Brothers* (a collaboration with his brothers Frederick and Charles), was published in 1827, when he was only eighteen, and was received with virtually no notice. Volumes published in 1830 and 1832 were largely attacked by the few critics who reviewed them. But the two volumes of *Poems* (1842) were met with both popular and critical acclaim, and *In Memoriam* (1850) was hailed as a masterpiece. Largely on the weight of that last publication, Tennyson replaced William Wordsworth as Poet Laureate after the death of the elder poet. From then until the end of his life, Tennyson was consistently celebrated as the most important poet of his age.

Throughout his career, Tennyson showed a distinct capacity for linking scenery to states of mind. As early as 1835, J. S. Mill identified the special kind of scene painting to be found in poems such as "Mariana" (1830): "not the power of producing that rather vapid species of composition usually termed descriptive poetry . . . but the power of *creating* scenery, in keeping with some state of human feeling so fitted to it as to be the embodied symbol of it, and to summon up the state of feeling itself, with a force not to be surpassed by anything but reality." Tennyson's poetry is also

remarkable for its musical qualities, a gift he uses to particularly moving effect in poems such as "Tithonus" and "The Lotos-Eaters." It was, however, *In Memoriam* that marked Tennyson as the bard of his age. Dedicated to, and memorializing his university friend Arthur Henry Hallam, who died at twenty-two from a ruptured aneurysm while traveling in Europe, *In Memoriam* consists of 131 sections with a prologue and an epilogue, and was written in stages over the course of seventeen years. Despite Tennyson's insistence that it was a poem rather than a simple record of his own grief, at least some readers regarded it almost as a manual for the mourning process; it became a popular gift for the bereaved. In addition to a record of grief, however, Tennyson uses the experience of loss to address some of the most pressing philosophical and religious issues of his time: the problem of belief in an age of disbelief; the questions raised by the geologic record and evolutionary theory; the apparent cruelty of the natural world. The poem also grapples, tentatively, with an issue that few Victorian readers appear to have registered explicitly—the difficulty of love between men in a culture that has no acknowledged place for such feelings.

Alfred Tennyson was the fourth son in a family of twelve children. It was an unhappy and complicated household. Tennyson's father, the Reverend George Tennyson, was a man of considerable learning. The eldest son of a wealthy landowner, he had expected to be heir to his family's estates; instead, he was disinherited in favor of his younger brother and had to make his own livelihood by joining the clergy, a profession that he disliked. After George Tennyson settled in a small rectory in Somersby, his brooding sense of dissatisfaction led to increasingly violent bouts of drunkenness; he nevertheless tutored his sons in classical and modern languages to prepare them for entering the university. His children were marked by both his temperament and his temper: one of Tennyson's brothers had to be confined to an insane asylum for life; another was long addicted to opium; another had violent quarrels with his father.

Before leaving this difficult home for Cambridge, Tennyson had already demonstrated a flair for writing verse—precocious exercises

in the manner of Milton or Byron or the Elizabethan dramatists. Although unremarked by critics, *Poems by Two Brothers* drew the attention of a group of gifted undergraduates at Cambridge, "the Apostles," who encouraged him to devote his life to poetry. Up until that time the young man had known scarcely anyone outside his own family. He was painfully shy, and the friendships he found at Cambridge as well as the intellectual and political discussions in which he participated, gave him confidence and widened his horizons as a poet. This is the context in which Tennyson first met Hallam, whose friendship became so significant to him both personally and aesthetically. Hallam was a leader of the Apostles, and he later became engaged to Tennyson's sister Emily.

Tennyson's career at Cambridge was interrupted and finally broken off in 1831 by family turmoil and financial need, and he returned home to study and practice the craft of poetry. Then came many years of difficulty: Tennyson suffered acutely under the hostile criticism of his early volumes. His 1842 volumes demonstrated a remarkable leap forward, but it was not until 1850 and the publication of *In Memoriam* that he became sufficiently financially secure to marry Emily Sellwood (1813–1896), with whom he had corresponded since 1836.

His life thereafter was a comfortable one. He was as popular as Byron had been, and the earnings from his poetry (sometimes exceeding £10,000 a year) enabled him to purchase a house in the country and to enjoy the kind of seclusion he liked. His notoriety was enhanced, like that of George Bernard Shaw and Walt Whitman, by his colorful appearance. Huge and shaggy in cloak and broad-brimmed hat, gruff in manner, he impressed everyone as what is called a "character." The pioneering photographer Julia Cameron, who took magnificent portraits of him, called him "the most beautiful old man on earth." Tennyson had a booming voice that electrified listeners when he read his poetry, "mouthing out his hollow o's and a's, / Deep-chested music," as he would covertly describe himself in an early version of his Arthurian epic. Moreover, for many Victorian readers, he seemed not only a great poetical phrase maker and a

striking individual but also a wise man whose occasional pronouncements on politics or world affairs represented the national voice itself. In 1884 he accepted a peerage. In 1892 he died and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

While the most popular of Tennyson's earlier poems are meditative, even melancholy, after 1850, the poet wrote a series of engagements with events of the moment over which his thoughts and feelings had no time to brood. Several of these are what he himself called "newspaper verse." They are effectively letters to the editor, with the heat we expect of such productions. "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (1854), inspired by a report in the London *Times* of a cavalry charge at Balaclava during the Crimean War, is one of the most fascinating and difficult of his productions in this category, celebrating as it does the unquestioning obedience of young soldiers sent to their deaths in war as a result of administrative incompetence. Tennyson's position on the British Empire is even more enthusiastically jingoistic. In "The Defense of Lucknow," one of the new additions to this volume, the poet celebrates the supposed bravery of the British soldiers who came under attack during the 1857 uprising in India. This poem underscores Tennyson's sense of the importance of the imperial mission, and his conviction of the ingratitude of those native soldiers (sepoys) and peasants who sought to reject British rule.

Tennyson's poems of contemporary events were popular in his own day. So too were those poems in which, as in "Locksley Hall" (1842), he dipped into the future. The technological changes wrought by Victorian inventors and engineers fascinated him, sometimes giving him an exultant assurance of human progress. At other times the horrors of industrialism's by-products in the slums, the persistence of barbarity and bloodshed, and the greed of the newly rich destroyed his hopes that humanity was evolving upward. In the final book of *Idylls of the King* (1869), Arthur laments that his "realm / Reels back into the beast": Tennyson was similarly haunted by the possibility of retrogression.

Despite Tennyson's fascination with technological developments, he was essentially a poet of the countryside, a man whose whole being was conditioned by the traditions and rhythms of rural rather than urban life. Tennyson said that "the words 'far, far away' had always a strange charm" for him, even in his childhood; he was haunted by what he called "the passion of the past." The past became his great theme, whether it be his own past (such as the times he shared with Hallam), his country's past (as in *Idylls of the King*), or the past of the world itself, as expressed in these lines from *In Memoriam:*

> There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
> O earth, what changes hast thou seen!
> There where the long street roars hath been
> The stillness of the central sea.

Here Tennyson also shows his striking modernity: he is the first major writer to express an awareness of the vast extent of geological time that came to haunt human consciousness after Victorian scientists exposed the age of the earth.

Mariana[1]

"Mariana in the moated grange."
—Measure for Measure

With blackest moss the flower-plots
  Were thickly crusted, one and all;
The rusted nails fell from the knots
  That held the pear to the gable wall.
The broken sheds looked sad and strange:
  Unlifted was the clinking latch;
  Weeded° and worn the ancient thatch
Upon the lonely moated grange.
    She only said, "My life is dreary,
      He cometh not," she said;
    She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
      I would that I were dead!"

Her tears fell with the dews at even;
  Her tears fell ere the dews were dried;
She could not look on the sweet heaven,
  Either at morn or eventide.
After the flitting of the bats,
  When thickest dark did trance° the sky,
  She drew her casement curtain by,
And glanced athwart° the glooming flats.[2]
    She only said, "The night is dreary,
      He cometh not," she said;
    She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
      I would that I were dead!"

Upon the middle of the night,

Waking she heard the nightfowl crow;
The cock sung out an hour ere light;
From the dark fen° the oxen's low
Came to her; without hope of change,
In sleep she seemed to walk forlorn,
Till cold winds woke the gray-eyed morn
About the lonely moated grange.
She only said, "The day is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!"

About a stonecast° from the wall
A sluice with blackened waters slept,
And o'er it many, round and small,
The clustered marish-mosses[3] crept.
Hard° by a poplar shook alway,
All silver-green with gnarlèd bark:
For leagues no other tree did mark
The level waste, the rounding gray.
She only said, "My life is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!"

And ever when the moon was low,
And the shrill winds were up and away,
In the white curtain, to and fro,
She saw the gusty shadow sway.
But when the moon was very low,
And wild winds bound within their cell,[4]
The shadow of the poplar fell
Upon her bed, across her brow.
She only said, "The night is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,

I would that I were dead!”

All day within the dreamy house,
The doors upon their hinges creaked;
The blue fly sung in the pane; the mouse
Behind the moldering wainscot° shrieked,
Or from the crevice peered about.
Old faces glimmered through the doors,
Old footsteps trod the upper floors,
Old voices called her from without.
She only said, “My life is dreary,
He cometh not,” she said;
She said, “I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!”

The sparrow’s chirrup on the roof,
The slow clock ticking, and the sound
Which to the wooing wind aloof
The poplar made, did all confound
Her sense; but most she loathed the hour
When the thick-moted sunbeam lay
Athwart the chambers, and the day
Was sloping toward his western bower.
Then, said she, “I am very dreary,
He will not come,” she said;
She wept, “I am aweary, aweary,
Oh God, that I were dead!”

1830

Endnotes

- Note 1: Mariana, in Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* 3.1.255, waits in a grange (an outlying farmhouse) for her lover, who has deserted her.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: An area of low, level ground.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: The little marsh-moss lumps that float on the surface of water [*Tennyson's note*].Return to reference 3
- Note 4: According to Virgil, Aeolus, god of winds, kept the winds imprisoned in a cave (*Aeneid* 1.50–59).Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *full of weeds*Return to reference °
- °: *cross*Return to reference °
- °: *across*Return to reference °
- °: *marshland*Return to reference °
- °: *stone's throw*Return to reference °
- °: *close*Return to reference °
- °: *wooden paneling*Return to reference °

The Lady of Shalott[1]

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  The story of the Lady of Shalott is a version of the tale of "Elaine the fair maid of Astolat," which appears in book 18 of *Morte Darthur* (1470) by Sir Thomas Malory (ca. 1405–1471). Tennyson, however, claimed he did not know Malory's version when he wrote his draft in 1832, identifying his source as a 14th-century tale about "la Damigella di Scalot": "I met the story first in some Italian *novelle:* but the web, mirror, island, etc., were my own. Indeed, I doubt whether I should ever have put it in that shape if I had been aware of the Maid of Astolat in *Morte d'Arthur."* Tennyson subjected this poem to numerous revisions over the years.
  Return to reference 1

Part 1

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold° and meet the sky;
And through the field the road runs by
To many-towered Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow°
Round an island there below,
The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Through the wave that runs forever
By the island in the river
Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veiled,
Slide the heavy barges trailed
By slow horses; and unhailed
The shallop° flitteth silken-sailed
Skimming down to Camelot:
But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly

From the river winding clearly,
Down to towered Camelot;
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers " 'Tis the fairy
Lady of Shalott."

Notes

- °: *rolling plain*Return to reference °
- °: *bloom*Return to reference °
- °: *light open boat*Return to reference °

Part 2

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colors gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay°
To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

And moving through a mirror clear[2]
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot;
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village churls,°
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,°
Sometimes a curly shepherd lad,
Or long-haired page in crimson clad,
Goes by to towered Camelot;
And sometimes through the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often through the silent nights

A funeral, with plumes and lights
And music, went to Camelot;
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed:
70 "I am half sick of shadows," said
The Lady of Shalott.

Endnotes

- Note 2: Weavers used mirrors, placed facing their looms, to see the progress of their work.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *pause*Return to reference °
- °: *peasants*Return to reference °
- °: *easy-paced horse*Return to reference °

Part 3

A bowshot from her bower eaves,
He rode between the barley sheaves,
The sun came dazzling through the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves[3]
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight forever kneeled
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glittered free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot;
And from his blazoned baldric[4] slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armor rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jeweled shone the saddle leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burned like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot;
As often through the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glowed;
On burnished hooves his war horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flowed

His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flashed into the crystal mirror,
"Tirra lirra,"[5] by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces through the room,
She saw the water lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She looked down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror cracked from side to side;
"The curse is come upon me," cried
The Lady of Shalott.

Endnotes

- Note 3: Armor protecting the leg below the knee.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A belt worn diagonally from one shoulder to the opposite hip, supporting a sword or bugle. "Blazoned": painted with a heraldic device.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Compare Autolycus's song in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* 4.3.9: "The lark, that tirra-lirra chants."Return to reference 5

Part 4

In the stormy east wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over towered Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse
Like some bold seër in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance—
With a glassy countenance
Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Through the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot;
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,

And her eyes were darkened wholly,[6]



The Lady of Shalott. This 1857 engraving, created by Dante Gabriel Rossetti for publisher Edward Moxon's illustrated collection of Tennyson's poetry, shows Lancelot musing "a little space" on the Lady in her boat.

Turned to towered Camelot.
For ere she reached upon the tide
The first house by the waterside,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they crossed themselves for fear,
All the knights at Camelot:
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, "She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott."

1831–32 1832, 1842

Endnotes

- Note 6: In the 1832 version this line read: "And her smooth face sharpened slowly." George Eliot informed Tennyson that she preferred the earlier version.Return to reference 6

The Lotos-Eaters[1]

"Courage!" he[2] said, and pointed toward the land,
"This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon."
In the afternoon they came unto a land[3]
In which it seemèd always afternoon.
All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;
And, like a downward smoke, the slender stream
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn,° did go;
And some through wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
From the inner land; far off, three mountaintops
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset-flushed; and, dewed with showery drops,
Up-clomb° the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmèd sunset lingered low adown
In the red West; through mountain clefts the dale
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down[4]
Bordered with palm, and many a winding vale
And meadow, set with slender galingale;[5]
A land where all things always seemed the same!
And round about the keel with faces pale,

Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
To each, but whoso did receive of them
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;
And deep-asleep he seemed, yet all awake,
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
Between the sun and moon upon the shore;
And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore
Most weary seemed the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam,
Then some one said, "We will return no more";
And all at once they sang, "Our island home°
Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam."

Choric Song[6]

1

There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tired[7] eyelids upon tired eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.
Here are cool mosses deep,

And through the moss the ivies creep,
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

2

Why are we weighed upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from weariness?
All things have rest: why should we toil alone,
We only toil, who are the first of things,
And make perpetual moan,
Still from one sorrow to another thrown;
Nor ever fold our wings,
And cease from wanderings,
Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm;
Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,
"There is no joy but calm!"—
Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things?[8]

3

Lo! in the middle of the wood,
The folded leaf is wooed from out the bud
With winds upon the branch, and there
Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
Sun-steeped at noon, and in the moon
Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow
Falls, and floats adown the air.
Lo! sweetened with summer light,
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
Drops in a silent autumn night.
All its allotted length of days
The flower ripens in its place,

Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

4

Hateful is the dark blue sky,
Vaulted o'er the dark blue sea.
Death is the end of life; ah, why
Should life all labor be?
Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
And in a little while our lips are dumb.
Let us alone. What is it that will last?
All things are taken from us, and become
Portions and parcels of the dreadful past.
Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
To war with evil? Is there any peace
In ever climbing up the climbing wave?
All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
In silence—ripen, fall, and cease:
Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease.[9]

5

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
With half-shut eyes ever to seem
Falling asleep in a half-dream!
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush[1] on the height;
To hear each other's whispered speech;
Eating the Lotos day by day,
To watch the crisping° ripples on the beach,
And tender curving lines of creamy spray;
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;

To muse and brood and live again in memory,
With those old faces of our infancy
Heaped over with a mound of grass,
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass!

6

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
And dear the last embraces of our wives
And their warm tears; but all hath suffered change;
For surely now our household hearths are cold,
Our sons inherit us,° our looks are strange,
And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.
Or else the island princes[2] overbold
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings
Before them of the ten years' war in Troy,
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.
Is there confusion in the little isle?
Let what is broken so remain.
The Gods are hard to reconcile;
'Tis hard to settle order once again.
There *is* confusion worse than death,
Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
Long labor unto aged breath,
Sore tasks to hearts worn out by many wars
And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

7

But, propped on beds of amaranth and moly,[3]
How sweet—while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly—
With half-dropped eyelid still,
Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
To watch the long bright river drawing slowly
His waters from the purple hill—

To hear the dewy echoes calling
From cave to cave through the thick-twined vine—
To watch the emerald-colored water falling
Through many a woven acanthus[4] wreath divine!
Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
Only to hear were sweet, stretched out beneath the pine.

8

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak,
The Lotos blows by every winding creek;
All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone;
Through every hollow cave and alley lone
Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos dust is blown.
We have had enough of action, and of motion we,
Rolled to starboard, rolled to larboard, when the surge was seething free,
Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-fountains in the sea.
Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
In the hollow Lotos land to live and lie reclined
On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind.
For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts° are hurled
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly curled
Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world;
Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and fiery sands,

Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking
ships, and praying hands.
But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful
song
Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of
wrong,
Like a tale of little meaning though the words are
strong;
Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the
soil,
Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring
toil,
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil;
Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whispered
—down in hell
Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys
dwell,
Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.[5]
Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the
shore
Than labor in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave
and oar;
O, rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander
more.

1832, 1842

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Based on a short episode from the *Odyssey* (9.82–97) in which the weary Greek veterans of the Trojan War are tempted by a desire to abandon their long voyage homeward. As Odysseus later reported: "On the tenth day we set foot on the land of the lotos-eaters who eat a flowering food. . . . I sent forth certain of

my company [who] . . . mixed with the men of the lotos-eaters who gave . . . them of the lotos to taste. Now whosoever of them did eat the honey-sweet fruit of the lotos had no more wish to bring tidings nor to come back, but there he chose to abide . . . forgetful of his homeward way."

Tennyson expands Homer's brief account into an elaborate picture of weariness and the desire for rest and death. The descriptions in the first stanzas are similar to Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590) 2.6 and employ the same stanza form. The final section derives, in part, from Lucretius's conception of the gods in *De Rerum Natura* (ca. 55 B.C.E.).
Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Odysseus (or Ulysses).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The repetition of "land" from line 1 was deliberate; Tennyson said that this "no rhyme" was "lazier" in its effect. This technique of repeating words, phrases, and sounds continues; see "afternoon" (lines 3–4) and the rhyming of "adown" and "down" (lines 19 and 21).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: An open plain on high ground.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A plant resembling tall coarse grass.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Sung by the mariners.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Tennyson wanted the word to be pronounced as *tie-yerd* rather than *tier'd* or *tire-èd*, thus "making the word neither monosyllable or disyllabic, but a dreamy child of the two."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Compare *The Faerie Queene* 2.6.17: "Why then dost thou, O man, that of them all / Art Lord, and eke of nature Sovereaine, / Wilfully . . . wast thy joyous houres in needlesse paine?"Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Compare *The Faerie Queen* 1.9.40: "Sleepe after toyle, port after stormie seas, / Ease after warre, death after life does greatly please."Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Myrrh, a resin used in perfume and incense, is associated with sweetness and comfort.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: The suitors of Penelope, Odysseus's wife; during his long absence they have settled themselves as guests in his hall as they pressure her to remarry.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A flower with magical properties mentioned by Homer. "Amaranth": a legendary unfading flower.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A plant resembling a thistle. Its leaves were the model for ornaments on Corinthian columns.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A yellow lilylike flower supposed to grow in Elysium—in classical mythology a paradise for heroes favored by the gods.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *fine thin linen*Return to reference °
- °: *climbed up*Return to reference °
- °: *Ithaca*Return to reference °
- °: *curling*Return to reference °
- °: *succeed us as our heirs*Return to reference °
- °: *thunderbolts*Return to reference °

Ulysses[1]

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Matched with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws[2] unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed,[3] and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel; I will drink
Life to the lees. All times I have enjoyed
Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades[4]
Vexed the dim sea. I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known—cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honored of them all—
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy,
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough
Gleams that untraveled world whose margin fades
Forever and forever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnished, not to shine in use![5]
As though to breathe were life! Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains; but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire

To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the scepter and the isle—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfill
This labor, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and through soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centered in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet° adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail;
There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toiled, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine,[6] and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads°—you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honor and his toil.
Death closes all; but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks;
The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs; the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths[7]
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;

It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,[8]
And see the great Achilles,[9] whom we knew.
Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are
—
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

1833 1842

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  According to Dante, after the fall of Troy, Ulysses never returned to his island home of Ithaca. Instead he persuaded some of his followers to seek new experiences by a voyage of exploration westward out beyond the Strait of Gibraltar. In his inspiring speech to his aging crew he said: "Consider your origin: you were not made to live as brutes, but to pursue virtue and knowledge" (*Inferno* 26). Tennyson modified Dante's 14th-century version by combining it with Homer's account (*Odyssey* 19–24). Thus Tennyson has Ulysses make his speech in Ithaca some time after he has returned home; reunited with his wife, Penelope, and his son, Telemachus; and, presumably, resumed his administrative responsibilities involved in governing his kingdom.
  Tennyson stated that this poem expressed his own "need of going forward and braving the struggle of life" after the death of Arthur Hallam.
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Measure out rewards and punishments.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Compare Shakespeare's *Hamlet* 4.4.9.23–25: "What is a man / If his chief good . . . Be but to sleep and feed?—a beast, no more."Return to reference 3

- Note 4: A group of stars (literally, “rainy ones”) in the constellation Taurus; their heliacal rising and setting generally coincided with the season of heavy rains. “Scudding drifts”: driving showers of spray and rain.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Compare Ulysses’ speech in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* 3.3.144–47: “Perseverance, dear my lord, / Keeps honour bright. To have done is to hang / Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail / In monumental mock’ry.”Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, varying fortunes.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The outer ocean or river that the Greeks believed surrounded the flat circle of the earth; the stars descended into it.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: In Greek myth the Islands of the Blessed, a paradise of perpetual summer, located in the far-western ocean, where the virtuous and heroes dwell forever after death (often identified with Elysium).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The greatest of the Greek warriors at Troy, where he was killed.Return to reference 9

Notes

- °: *suitable, fitting*Return to reference °
- °: *confidence*Return to reference °

Tithonus[1]

The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
The vapors weep their burthen to the ground,
Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
And after many a summer dies the swan.[2]
Me only cruel immortality
Consumes; I wither slowly in thine arms,[3]
Here at the quiet limit of the world,
A white-haired shadow roaming like a dream
The ever-silent spaces of the East,
Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of morn.
Alas! for this gray shadow, once a man—
So glorious in his beauty and thy choice,
Who madest him thy chosen, that he seemed
To his great heart none other than a God!
I asked thee, "Give me immortality."
Then didst thou grant mine asking with a smile,
Like wealthy men who care not how they give.
But thy strong Hours indignant worked their wills,
And beat me down and marred and wasted me,
And though they could not end me, left me maimed
To dwell in presence of immortal youth,
Immortal age beside immortal youth,
And all I was in ashes. Can thy love,
Thy beauty, make amends, though even now,
Close over us, the silver star,[4] thy guide,
Shines in those tremulous eyes that fill with tears
To hear me? Let me go; take back thy gift.
Why should a man desire in any way
To vary from the kindly race of men,
Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance[5]

Where all should pause, as is most meet for all?
A soft air fans the cloud apart; there comes
A glimpse of that dark world where I was born.
Once more the old mysterious glimmer steals
From thy pure brows, and from thy shoulders pure,
And bosom beating with a heart renewed.
Thy cheek begins to redden through the gloom,
Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to mine,
Ere yet they blind the stars, and the wild team[6]
Which love thee, yearning for thy yoke, arise,
And shake the darkness from their loosened manes,
And beat the twilight into flakes of fire.
Lo! ever thus thou growest beautiful
In silence, then before thine answer given
Departest, and thy tears are on my cheek.
Why wilt thou ever scare me with thy tears,
And make me tremble lest a saying learnt,
In days far-off, on that dark earth, be true?
"The Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts."
Ay me! ay me! with what another heart
In days far-off, and with what other eyes
I used to watch—if I be he that watched—
The lucid outline forming round thee; saw
The dim curls kindle into sunny rings;
Changed with thy mystic change, and felt my blood
Glow with the glow that slowly crimsoned all
Thy presence and thy portals, while I lay,
Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-warm
With kisses balmier than half-opening buds
Of April, and could hear the lips that kissed
Whispering I knew not what of wild and sweet,
Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing,
While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.[7]
Yet hold me not forever in thine East;
How can my nature longer mix with thine?

Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold
Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled feet
Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when the steam
Floats up from those dim fields about the homes
Of happy men that have the power to die,
And grassy barrows° of the happier dead.
Release me, and restore me to the ground.
Thou seest all things, thou wilt see my grave;
Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn,
I earth in earth forget these empty courts,
And thee returning on thy silver wheels.

1833, 1859 1860

Endnotes

- Note 1: A Trojan prince loved by the goddess of the dawn, Eos or Aurora, who obtained for him the gift of living forever but neglected to ask for the gift of everlasting youth.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Some species of swans live for at least fifty years.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Aurora's arms.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The morning star that precedes the dawn.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: What is decreed or ordained as human destiny.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The horses that draw Aurora's chariot into the sky at daybreak.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The walls of Troy ("Ilion") were supposed to have been built to the strains of the god Apollo's music.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *burial mounds*Return to reference °

Break, Break, Break

Break, break, break,
   On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
   The thoughts that arise in me.

O, well for the fisherman's boy,
   That he shouts with his sister at play!
O, well for the sailor lad,
   That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
   To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanished hand,
   And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
   At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
   Will never come back to me.

1834 1842

Locksley Hall[1]

Comrades, leave me here a little, while as yet ’tis early morn;
Leave me here, and when you want me, sound upon the bugle horn.

’Tis the place, and all around it, as of old, the curlews call,
Dreary gleams[2] about the moorland flying over Locksley Hall;

Locksley Hall, that in the distance overlooks the sandy tracts,
And the hollow ocean-ridges roaring into cataracts.

Many a night from yonder ivied casement, ere I went to rest,
Did I look on great Orion sloping slowly to the west.

Many a night I saw the Pleiads,[3] rising through the mellow shade,
Glitter like a swarm of fireflies tangled in a silver braid.

Here about the beach I wandered, nourishing a youth sublime
With the fairy tales of science, and the long result of time;

When the centuries behind me like a fruitful land reposed;
When I clung to all the present for the promise that it closed°

When I dipped into the future far as human eye could see,
Saw the vision of the world and all the wonder that would be.—

In the spring a fuller crimson comes upon the robin’s breast;
In the spring the wanton lapwing gets himself another crest;

In the spring a livelier iris changes on the burnished dove;[4]
In the spring a young man’s fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love.

Then her cheek was pale and thinner than should be for one so young,
And her eyes on all my motions with a mute observance hung.

And I said, “My cousin Amy, speak, and speak the truth to me,
Trust me, cousin, all the current of my being sets to thee.”

On her pallid cheek and forehead came a color and a light,
As I have seen the rosy red flushing in the northern night.

And she turned—her bosom shaken with a sudden storm of sighs—
All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark of hazel eyes—

Saying, "I have hid my feelings, fearing they should do me wrong";
Saying, "Dost thou love me, cousin?" weeping, "I have loved thee long."

Love took up the glass of Time, and turned it in his glowing hands;
Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords with might;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, passed in music out of sight.

Many a morning on the moorland did we hear the copses ring,
And her whisper thronged my pulses with the fullness of the spring.

Many an evening by the waters did we watch the stately ships,
And our spirits rushed together at the touching of the lips.

O my cousin, shallow-hearted! O my Amy, mine no more!
O the dreary, dreary moorland! O the barren, barren shore!

Falser than all fancy fathoms, falser than all songs have sung,
Puppet to a father's threat, and servile to a shrewish tongue!

Is it well to wish thee happy?—having known me—to decline
On a range of lower feelings and a narrower heart than mine!

Yet it shall be; thou shalt lower to his level day by day,
What is fine within thee growing coarse to sympathize with clay.

As the husband is, the wife is; thou art mated with a clown,°
And the grossness of his nature will have weight to drag thee down.

He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its novel force,
Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse.

What is this? his eyes are heavy; think not they are glazed with wine.

Go to him, it is thy duty; kiss him, take his hand in thine.

It may be my lord is weary, that his brain is overwrought;
Soothe him with thy finer fancies, touch him with thy lighter thought.

He will answer to the purpose, easy things to understand—
Better thou wert dead before me, though I slew thee with my hand!

Better thou and I were lying, hidden from the heart's disgrace,
Rolled in one another's arms, and silent in a last embrace.

Cursed be the social wants that sin against the strength of youth!
Cursed be the social lies that warp us from the living truth!

Cursed be the sickly forms that err from honest Nature's rule!
Cursed be the gold that gilds the straitened° forehead of the fool!

Well—'tis well that I should bluster!—Hadst thou less unworthy proved—
Would to God—for I had loved thee more than ever wife was loved.

Am I mad, that I should cherish that which bears but bitter fruit?
I will pluck it from my bosom, though my heart be at the root.

Never, though my mortal summers to such length of years should come
As the many-wintered crow[5] that leads the clanging rookery home.

Where is comfort? in division of the records of the mind?
Can I part her from herself, and love her, as I knew her, kind?

I remember one that perished; sweetly did she speak and move;
Such a one do I remember, whom to look at was to love.

Can I think of her as dead, and love her for the love she bore?
No—she never loved me truly; love is love for evermore.

Comfort? comfort scorned of devils! this is truth the poet[6] sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.

Drug thy memories, lest thou learn it, lest thy heart be put to proof,
In the dead unhappy night, and when the rain is on the roof.

Like a dog, he hunts in dreams, and thou art staring at the wall,
Where the dying night-lamp flickers, and the shadows rise and fall.

Then a hand shall pass before thee, pointing to his drunken sleep,
To thy widowed[7] marriage-pillows, to the tears that thou wilt weep.

Thou shalt hear the "Never, never," whispered by the phantom years.
And a song from out the distance in the ringing of thine ears;

And an eye shall vex thee, looking ancient kindness on thy pain.
Turn thee, turn thee on thy pillow; get thee to thy rest again.

Nay, but Nature brings thee solace; for a tender voice will cry.
'Tis a purer life than thine, a lip to drain thy trouble dry.

Baby lips will laugh me down; my latest rival brings thee rest.
Baby fingers, waxen touches, press me from the mother's breast.

O, the child too clothes the father with a dearness not his due.
Half is thine and half is his; it will be worthy of the two.

O, I see thee old and formal, fitted to thy petty part,
With a little hoard of maxims preaching down a daughter's heart.
"They were dangerous guides the feelings—she herself was not exempt—
Truly, she herself had suffered"—Perish in thy self-contempt!

Overlive it—lower yet—be happy! wherefore should I care?
I myself must mix with action, lest I wither by despair.

What is that which I should turn to, lighting upon days like these?
Every door is barred with gold, and opens but to golden keys.

Every gate is thronged with suitors, all the markets overflow.
I have but an angry fancy; what is that which I should do?

I had been content to perish, falling on the foeman's ground,
When the ranks are rolled in vapor, and the winds are laid with sound.[8]

But the jingling of the guinea helps the hurt that Honor feels,
And the nations do but murmur, snarling at each other's heels.

Can I but relive in sadness? I will turn that earlier page.
Hide me from my deep emotion, O thou wondrous Mother-Age![9]

Make me feel the wild pulsation that I felt before the strife,
When I heard my days before me, and the tumult of my life;

Yearning for the large excitement that the coming years would yield,
Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves his father's field,

And at night along the dusky highway near and nearer drawn,
Sees in heaven the light of London flaring like a dreary dawn;

And his spirit leaps within him to be gone before him then,
Underneath the light he looks at, in among the throngs of men;

Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something new;
That which they have done but earnest° of the things that they
shall do.

For I dipped into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,[1]
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales;

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rained a ghastly dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue;

Far along the world-wide whisper of the south wind rushing warm,
With the standards of the peoples plunging through the thunderstorm;

Till the war drum throbbed no longer, and the battle flags were furled
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

There the common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm in awe,
And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapped in[2] universal law.

So I triumphed ere my passion sweeping through me left me dry,
Left me with the palsied heart, and left me with the jaundiced eye;

Eye, to which all order festers, all things here are out of joint.
Science moves, but slowly, slowly, creeping on from point to point;

Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion, creeping nigher,
Glares at one that nods and winks behind a slowly-dying fire.

Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns.

What is that to him that reaps not harvest of his youthful joys,
Though the deep heart of existence beat forever like a boy's?

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and I linger on the shore,
And the individual withers, and the world is more and more.

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and he bears a laden breast,
Full of sad experience, moving toward the stillness of his rest.

Hark, my merry comrades call me, sounding on the bugle horn,
They to whom my foolish passion were a target for their scorn.

Shall it not be scorn to me to harp on such a moldered string?
I am shamed through all my nature to have loved so slight a thing.

Weakness to be wroth with weakness! woman's pleasure, woman's pain—
Nature made them blinder motions bounded in a shallower brain.

Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions, matched with mine,
Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine—

Here at least, where nature sickens, nothing. Ah, for some retreat
Deep in yonder shining Orient, where my life began to beat.

Where in wild Mahratta-battle[3] fell my father evil-starred—
I was left a trampled orphan, and a selfish uncle's ward.

Or to burst all links of habit—there to wander far away,
On from island unto island at the gateways of the day.

Larger constellations burning, mellow moons and happy skies,

Breadths of tropic shade and palms in cluster, knots of Paradise.

Never comes the trader, never floats an European flag,
Slides the bird o'er lustrous woodland, swings the trailer° from the crag;

Droops the heavy-blossomed bower, hangs the heavy-fruited tree—
Summer isles of Eden lying in dark purple spheres of sea.

There methinks would be enjoyment more than in this march of mind,
In the steamship, in the railway, in the thoughts that shake mankind.

There the passions cramped no longer shall have scope and breathing space;
I will take some savage woman, she shall rear my dusky race.

Iron-jointed, supple-sinewed, they shall dive, and they shall run,
Catch the wild goat by the hair, and hurl their lances in the sun;

Whistle back the parrot's call, and leap the rainbows of the brooks,
Not with blinded eyesight poring over miserable books—

Fool, again the dream, the fancy! but I *know* my words are wild,
But I count the gray barbarian lower than the Christian child.

I, to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant of our glorious gains,
Like a beast with lower pleasures, like a beast with lower pains!

Mated with a squalid savage—what to me were sun or clime?
I the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time—

I that rather held it better men should perish one by one,
Than that earth should stand at gaze like Joshua's moon in Ajalon![4]

Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let us range,
Let the great world spin forever down the ringing grooves[5] of change.

Through the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger day;
Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.[6]

Mother-Age—for mine I knew not—help me as when life begun;
Rift the hills, and roll the waters, flash the lightnings, weigh the sun.

O, I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath not set.
Ancient founts of inspiration well through all my fancy yet.

Howsoever these things be, a long farewell to Locksley Hall!
Now for me the woods may wither, now for me the roof-tree fall.

Comes a vapor from the margin,° blackening over heath and holt,°
Cramming all the blast before it, in its breast a thunderbolt.

Let it fall on Locksley Hall, with rain or hail, or fire or snow;
For the mighty wind arises, roaring seaward, and I go.

1837–38 1842

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  The situation in this poem—of a young man's being jilted by a woman who chose to marry a wealthy landowner—may have been suggested to Tennyson by the experience of his brother Frederick, a hot-tempered man who had fallen in love with his cousin Julia Tennyson and who was similarly unsuccessful. It may also have been inspired by Tennyson's own frustrated courtship of Rosa Baring, who rejected the young poet in favor of a wealthy suitor. Concerning the ranting tone of the speaker (a tone accentuated by the heavily marked trochaic meter), Tennyson said: "The whole poem represents young life, its good side, its deficiencies, and its yearnings."
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Tennyson stated that the noun "gleams" refers not to "curlews" flying but to streaks of light.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Or the Pleiades, seven stars in the constellation Taurus.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The rainbowlike colors of a dove's throat plumage are intensified in the mating season.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A rook, a long-lived bird.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Dante; see *Inferno* 5.121–23: "There is no greater sorrow / Than to be mindful of the happy time in misery" [*Longfellow's*

translation].Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Presumably figurative. Her marriage having become a mockery, she is widowed.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: It was once believed that the firing of artillery stilled the winds.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A happier past at life's beginning, which generated a more confident anticipation of the future (see also line 185).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Probably airships, such as balloons. "Argosies": merchant vessels.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: "Lapped in": encompassed by.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Reference to wars waged by a Hindu confederacy against the British East India Company (1803 and 1817).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: At Joshua's command the sun and moon stood still while the Israelites completed the slaughter of their enemies in the valley of Ajalon (Joshua 10:12–13).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Railroad tracks. Tennyson at one time had the impression that train wheels ran in grooved rails.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: China, regarded in the 19th century as a static, unprogressive country. See Mill, *On Liberty* (1859), pp. 155–57.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *enclosed*Return to reference °
- °: *boor*Return to reference °
- °: *narrowed*Return to reference °
- °: *pledge*Return to reference °
- °: *vine*Return to reference °
- °: *riverbank*Return to reference °
- °: *wood*Return to reference °

From The Princess[1]

Endnotes

- Note 1: *The Princess* (1847), a long narrative poem, contains interludes in which occasional songs are sung. Several of these songs, two of which are printed here, have been set to music by various composers.Return to reference 1

Tears, Idle Tears[2]

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remembered kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feigned
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more!

1847

Endnotes

- Note 2:
  Tennyson commented: "This song came to me on the yellowing autumn-tide at Tintern Abbey, full for me of its bygone

memories.” This locale would be for him associated both with Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey” (1798) and with memories of Arthur Hallam, who was buried across the Bristol Channel in this area. “It is what I have always felt even from a boy, and what as a boy I called the ‘passion of the past.’ And it is so always with me now; it is the distance that charms me in the landscape, the picture and the past, and not the immediate today in which I move.”
Return to reference 2

Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal

Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white;
Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk;
Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font.
The firefly wakens; waken thou with me.

Now droops the milk-white peacock like a ghost,
And like a ghost she glimmers on to me.

Now lies the Earth all Danaë[1] to the stars,
And all thy heart lies open unto me.

Now slides the silent meteor on, and leaves
A shining furrow, as thy thoughts in me.

Now folds the lily all her sweetness up,
And slips into the bosom of the lake.
So fold thyself, my dearest, thou, and slip
Into my bosom and be lost in me.

1847

Endnotes

- Note 1: A Greek princess, whose father confined her in a brazen chamber after hearing the oracle that her son would kill him. But Zeus came to her in the form of a shower of gold, and she bore the hero Perseus.Return to reference 1

["The woman's cause is man's"][1]

"Blame not thyself too much," I said, "nor blame
Too much the sons of men and barbarous laws;
These were the rough ways of the world till now.
Henceforth thou hast a helper, me, that know
The woman's cause is man's: they rise or sink
Together, dwarfed or godlike, bond or free:
For she that out of Lethe[2] scales with man
The shining steps of Nature, shares with man
His nights, his days, moves with him to one goal,
Stays all the fair young planet in her hands—
If she be small, slight-natured, miserable,
How shall men grow? but work no more alone!
Our place is much: as far as in us lies
We two will serve them both in aiding her—
Will clear away the parasitic forms
That seem to keep her up but drag her down—
Will leave her space to burgeon out of all
Within her—let her make herself her own
To give or keep, to live and learn and be
All that not harms distinctive womanhood.
For woman is not undevelopt man,
But diverse: could we make her as the man,
Sweet Love were slain: his dearest bond is this,
Not like to like, but like in difference.
Yet in the long years liker must they grow;
The man be more of woman, she of man;
He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world;
She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,
Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind;

Till at the last she set herself to man,
Like perfect music unto noble words;
And so these twain, upon the skirts of Time,
Sit side by side, full-summed in all their powers,
Dispensing harvest, sowing the To-be,
Self-reverent each and reverencing each,
Distinct in individualities,
But like each other even as those who love.
Then comes the statelier Eden back to men:
Then reign the world's great bridals, chaste and calm:
Then springs the crowning race of humankind.
May these things be!"
Sighing she spoke "I fear
They will not."
"Dear, but let us type° them now
In our own lives, and this proud watchword rest
Of equal; seeing either sex alone
Is half itself, and in true marriage lies
Nor equal, nor unequal: each fulfils
Defect in each, and always thought in thought,
Purpose in purpose, will in will, they grow,
The single pure and perfect animal,
The two-celled heart beating, with one full stroke,
Life."
And again sighing she spoke: "A dream
That once was mine! what woman taught you this?"

1839–47 1847

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  The Princess was Tennyson's attempt to address the contemporary debate over woman's proper role. It tells the story of a prince who courts the young and beautiful Princess Ida. She has vowed she will never marry and has established a

women’s university from which men are excluded. The prince and his two companions dress themselves up in women’s clothes to gain entrance to the university. When a battle ensues—in which King Gama, the prince’s father, invades the university to rescue his son and force Ida to marry him—the university is turned into a hospital and the princess is persuaded of the error of her ways. The prince’s final vision, from book 7 (reprinted here), in which he imagines a future of gradual change, by which men and women adopt the strengths of the other while maintaining their distinct natures, has been a key text in debates about Victorian constructions of masculinity and femininity. In the operetta *Princess Ida* (1884), W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan parody Tennyson’s poem and satirize feminism. Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In the classical underworld, the river of forgetfulness.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *model*Return to reference °

In Memoriam A. H. H. When Arthur Hallam died suddenly at the age of twenty-two, probably of a brain aneurysm, Tennyson felt that his life had been shattered. Hallam was not only Tennyson's closest friend, and his sister's fiancé, but a critic and champion of his poetry. When Tennyson lost Hallam's love and support, he was overwhelmed with doubts about his own life and vocation and about the meaning of the universe and humankind's place in it. To express the variety of his feelings and reflections, he began to compose a series of lyrics. Tennyson later arranged these "short swallow-flights of song," as he called them, written at intervals over a period of seventeen years, into one long elegy. Although the resulting poem has many affinities with traditional elegies like Milton's "Lycidas" (1638) and Shelley's *Adonais* (1821), its structure is strikingly different from either. It is made up of individual lyric units that are seemingly self-contained but take their full meaning from their place in the whole. As T. S. Eliot has written, "It is unique: it is a long poem made by putting together lyrics, which have only the unity and continuity of a diary, the concentrated diary of a man confessing himself." Though intensely personal, the elegy expressed the religious doubts of his age. It is also a love poem. Like Shakespeare's sonnets, to which the poem alludes, *In Memoriam* vests its most intense emotion in relationships between men.

The sections of the poem record a progressive development from despair to some sort of hope, yet the pattern of progress in the poem is not a simple unimpeded movement upward. Dramatic conflicts recur throughout. Thus the most intense expression of doubt occurs not at the beginning of *In Memoriam* but as late as sections 54, 55, and 56.

The quatrain form in which the whole poem is written is usually called the "*In Memoriam* stanza," although it had been occasionally used by earlier poets. So rigid a form taxed Tennyson's ingenuity in achieving variety, but it is one of several means by which the diverse parts of the poem are knit together. The introductory section, consisting of eleven stanzas, is commonly referred to as the

“Prologue,” although Tennyson did not assign a title to it. It was written in 1849 after the rest of the poem was complete.

From In Memoriam A. H. H.

OBIIT MDCCCXXXIII[1]

Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
  Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
  By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove;[2]

Thine are these orbs[3] of light and shade;
  Thou madest Life in man and brute;
  Thou madest Death; and lo, thy foot
Is on the skull which thou hast made.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:
  Thou madest man, he knows not why,
  He thinks he was not made to die;
And thou hast made him: thou art just.

Thou seemest human and divine,
  The highest, holiest manhood, thou.
  Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours, to make them thine.

Our little systems[4] have their day;
  They have their day and cease to be;
  They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

We have but faith: we cannot know,
  For knowledge is of things we see;
  And yet we trust it comes from thee,

A beam in darkness: let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
  But more of reverence in us dwell;
  That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before,[5]

But vaster. We are fools and slight;
  We mock thee when we do not fear:
  But help thy foolish ones to bear;
Help thy vain worlds to bear thy light.

Forgive what seemed my sin in me,
  What seemed my worth since I began;
  For merit lives from man to man,
And not from man, O Lord, to thee.

Forgive my grief for one removed,
  Thy creature, whom I found so fair.
  I trust he lives in thee, and there
I find him worthier to be loved.

Forgive these wild and wandering cries,
  Confusions of a wasted° youth;
  Forgive them where they fail in truth,
And in thy wisdom make me wise.

1849

1

I held it truth, with him who sings
  To one clear harp in divers tones,[6]
  That men may rise on stepping stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.

But who shall so forecast the years
  And find in loss a gain to match?
  Or reach a hand through time to catch
The far-off interest of tears?

Let Love clasp Grief lest both be drowned,
  Let darkness keep her raven gloss.
  Ah, sweeter to be drunk with loss,
To dance with Death, to beat the ground,

Than that the victor Hours should scorn
  The long result of love, and boast,
  "Behold the man that loved and lost,
But all he was is overworn."

2

Old yew, which graspest at the stones
  That name the underlying dead,
  Thy fibres net the dreamless head,
Thy roots are wrapped about the bones.

The seasons bring the flower again,
  And bring the firstling to the flock;
  And in the dusk of thee the clock
Beats out the little lives of men.

O, not for thee the glow, the bloom,
  Who changest not in any gale,
  Nor branding summer suns avail
To touch thy thousand years of gloom[7]

And gazing on thee, sullen tree,
  Sick for° thy stubborn hardihood,

I seem to fail from out my blood
And grow incorporate into thee.

3

O Sorrow, cruel fellowship,
O Priestess in the vaults of Death,
O sweet and bitter in a breath,
What whispers from thy lying lip?

"The stars," she whispers, "blindly run;
A web is woven across the sky;
From out waste places comes a cry,
And murmurs from the dying sun;

"And all the phantom, Nature, stands—
With all the music in her tone,
A hollow echo of my own—
A hollow form with empty hands."

And shall I take a thing so blind,
Embrace her° as my natural good;
Or crush her, like a vice of blood,
Upon the threshold of the mind?

4

To Sleep I give my powers away;
My will is bondsman to the dark;
I sit within a helmless bark,
And with my heart I muse and say:

O heart, how fares it with thee now,
That thou should fail from thy desire,

Who scarcely darest to inquire,
"What is it makes me beat so low?"

Something it is which thou hast lost,
Some pleasure from thine early years.
Break thou deep vase of chilling tears,
That grief hath shaken into frost![8]

Such clouds of nameless trouble cross
All night below the darkened eyes;
With morning wakes the will, and cries,
"Thou shalt not be the fool of loss."

5

I sometimes hold it half a sin
To put in words the grief I feel;
For words, like Nature, half reveal
And half conceal the Soul within.

But, for the unquiet heart and brain,
A use in measured language lies;
The sad mechanic exercise,
Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.

In words, like weeds,° I'll wrap me o'er,
Like coarsest clothes against the cold;
But that large grief which these enfold
Is given in outline and no more.

6

One writes, that "Other friends remain,"

That "Loss is common to the race"—
And common is the commonplace,
And vacant chaff° well meant for grain.

That loss is common would not make
My own less bitter, rather more:
Too common! Never morning wore
To evening, but some heart did break.

O father, wheresoe'er thou be,
Who pledgest° now thy gallant son;
A shot, ere half thy draft be done,
Hath stilled the life that beat from thee.

O mother, praying God will save
Thy sailor—while thy head is bowed,
His heavy-shotted° hammock-shroud
Drops in his vast and wandering grave.[9]

Ye know no more than I who wrought
At that last hour to please him well;[1]
Who mused on all I had to tell,
And something written, something thought;

Expecting still his advent home;
And ever met him on his way
With wishes, thinking, "here today,"
Or "here tomorrow will he come."

O somewhere, meek, the unconscious dove,
That sittest ranging° golden hair;
And glad to find thyself so fair,
Poor child, that waitest for thy love!

For now her father's chimney glows
In expectation of a guest;

And thinking "this will please him best,"
She takes a riband° or a rose;

For he will see them on tonight;
And with the thought her color burns;
And, having left the glass, she turns
Once more to set a ringlet right;

And, even when she turned, the curse
Had fallen, and her future Lord
Was drowned in passing through the ford,
Or killed in falling from his horse.

O what to her shall be the end?
And what to me remains of good?
To her, perpetual maidenhood,
And unto me no second friend.

7

Dark house,[2] by which once more I stand
Here in the long unlovely street,
Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasped no more—
Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
And like a guilty thing I creep
At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here; but far away
The noise of life begins again,
And ghastly through the drizzling rain
On the bald street breaks the blank day.

8

A happy lover who has come
  To look on her that loves him well,
  Who ’lights° and rings the gateway bell,
And learns her gone and far from home;

He saddens, all the magic light
  Dies off at once from bower and hall,
  And all the place is dark, and all
The chambers emptied of delight:

So find I every pleasant spot
  In which we two were wont to meet,
  The field, the chamber, and the street,
For all is dark where thou art not.

Yet as that other, wandering there
  In those deserted walks, may find
  A flower beat with rain and wind,
Which once she fostered up with care;

So seems it in my deep regret,
  O my forsaken heart, with thee
  And this poor flower of poesy
Which little cared for fades not yet.

But since it pleased a vanished eye,[3]
  I go to plant it on his tomb,
  That if it can it there may bloom,
Or dying, there at least may die.

9

Fair ship, that from the Italian shore[4]

Sailest the placid ocean-plains
With my lost Arthur's loved remains,
Spread thy full wings, and waft him o'er.

So draw him home to those that mourn
In vain; a favorable speed
Ruffle thy mirrored mast, and lead
Through prosperous floods his holy urn.

All night no ruder air perplex
Thy sliding keel, till Phosphor,° bright
As our pure love, through early light
Shall glimmer on the dewy decks.

Sphere all your lights around, above;
Sleep, gentle heavens, before the prow;
Sleep, gentle winds, as he sleeps now,
My friend, the brother of my love;

My Arthur, whom I shall not see
Till all my widowed race be run;
Dear as the mother to the son,
More than my brothers are to me.

10

I hear the noise about thy keel;
I hear the bell struck in the night;
I see the cabin window bright;
I see the sailor at the wheel.

Thou bring'st the sailor to his wife,
And traveled men from foreign lands;
And letters unto trembling hands;
And, thy dark freight, a vanished life.

So bring him; we have idle dreams;
  This look of quiet flatters thus
  Our home-bred fancies. O, to us,
The fools of habit, sweeter seems

To rest beneath the clover sod,
  That takes the sunshine and the rains,
  Or where the kneeling hamlet drains
The chalice of the grapes of God;[5]

Than if with thee the roaring wells
  Should gulf him fathom-deep in brine,
  And hands so often clasped in mine,
Should toss with tangle[°] and with shells.

11

Calm is the morn without a sound,
  Calm as to suit a calmer grief,
  And only through the faded leaf
The chestnut pattering to the ground;

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,[°]
  And on these dews that drench the furze,
  And all the silvery gossamers
That twinkle into green and gold;

Calm and still light on yon great plain
  That sweeps with all its autumn bowers,
  And crowded farms and lessening towers,
To mingle with the bounding main;[°]

Calm and deep peace in this wide air,
  These leaves that redden to the fall,

And in my heart, if calm at all,
If any calm, a calm despair;

Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,
And waves that sway themselves in rest,
And dead calm in that noble breast
Which heaves but with the heaving deep.

12

Lo, as a dove when up she springs
To bear through Heaven a tale of woe,
Some dolorous message knit below
The wild pulsation of her wings;

Like her I go; I cannot stay;
I leave this mortal ark behind,
A weight of nerves without a mind,
And leave the cliffs, and haste away

O'er ocean-mirrors rounded large,
And reach the glow of southern skies,
And see the sails at distance rise,
And linger weeping on the marge,°

And saying; "Comes he thus, my friend?
Is this the end of all my care?"
And circle moaning in the air:
"Is this the end? Is this the end?"

And forward dart again, and play
About the prow, and back return
To where the body sits, and learn
That I have been an hour away.

13

Tears of the widower, when he sees
  A late-lost form that sleep reveals,
  And moves his doubtful arms, and feels
Her place is empty, fall like these;

Which weep a loss forever new,
  A void where heart on heart reposed;
  And, where warm hands have pressed and closed,
Silence, till I be silent too;

Which weep the comrade of my choice,
  An awful thought, a life removed,
  The human-hearted man I loved,
A Spirit, not a breathing voice.

Come, Time, and teach me, many years,
  I do not suffer in a dream;
  For now so strange do these things seem,
Mine eyes have leisure for their tears,

My fancies time to rise on wing,
  And glance about the approaching sails,
  As though they brought but merchants' bales,
And not the burthen that they bring.

14

If one should bring me this report,
  That thou° hadst touched the land today,
And I went down unto the quay;[6]
And found thee lying in the port;

And standing, muffled round with woe,

Should see thy passengers in rank
Come stepping lightly down the plank
And beckoning unto those they know;

And if along with these should come
The man I held as half divine,
Should strike a sudden hand in mine,
And ask a thousand things of home;

And I should tell him all my pain,
And how my life had drooped of late,
And he should sorrow o'er my state
And marvel what possessed my brain;

And I perceived no touch of change,
No hint of death in all his frame,
But found him all in all the same,
I should not feel it to be strange.

15

Tonight the winds begin to rise
And roar from yonder dropping day;
The last red leaf is whirled away,
The rooks are blown about the skies;

The forest cracked, the waters curled,
The cattle huddled on the lea;
And wildly dashed on tower and tree
The sunbeam strikes along the world:

And but for fancies, which aver
That all thy motions gently pass
Athwart a plane of molten glass,[7]
I scarce could brook the strain and stir

That makes the barren branches loud;
  And but for fear it is not so,
  The wild unrest that lives in woe
Would dote and pore on yonder cloud

That rises upward always higher,
  And onward drags a laboring breast,
  And topples round the dreary west,
A looming bastion fringed with fire.

* * *

19

The Danube to the Severn[8] gave
  The darkened heart that beat no more;
  They laid him by the pleasant shore,
And in the hearing of the wave.

There twice a day the Severn fills;
  The salt sea water passes by,
And hushes half the babbling Wye,[9]
And makes a silence in the hills.

The Wye is hushed nor moved along,
  And hushed my deepest grief of all,
  When filled with tears that cannot fall,
I brim with sorrow drowning song.

The tide flows down, the wave again
Is vocal in its wooded walls;[1]
  My deeper anguish also falls,
And I can speak a little then.

* * *

21

I sing to him that rests below
  And, since the grasses round me wave,
I take the grasses of the grave,[2]
And make them pipes whereon to blow.

The traveler hears me now and then,
  And sometimes harshly will he speak:
  "This fellow would make weakness weak,
And melt the waxen hearts of men."

Another answers: "Let him be,
  He loves to make parade of pain,
  That with his piping he may gain
The praise that comes to constancy."

A third is wroth: "Is this an hour
  For private sorrow's barren song,
  When more and more the people throng
The chairs and thrones of civil power?

"A time to sicken and to swoon,
When Science reaches forth her arms[3]
  To feel from world to world, and charms
Her secret from the latest moon?"[4]

Behold, ye speak an idle thing;
  Ye never knew the sacred dust.
  I do but sing because I must,
And pipe but as the linnets° sing:

And one is glad; her note is gay,

For now her little ones have ranged;
  And one is sad; her note is changed,
Because her brood is stolen away.

22

The path by which we twain did go,
  Which led by tracts that pleased us well,
  Through four sweet years arose and fell,
From flower to flower, from snow to snow;

And we with singing cheered the way,
  And, crowned with all the season lent,
  From April on to April went,
And glad at heart from May to May.

But where the path we walked began
To slant the fifth autumnal slope,[5]
  As we descended following Hope,
There sat the Shadow feared of man;

Who broke our fair companionship,
  And spread his mantle dark and cold,
  And wrapped thee formless in the fold,
And dulled the murmur on thy lip,

And bore thee where I could not see
  Nor follow, though I walk in haste,
  And think that somewhere in the waste
The Shadow sits and waits for me.

23

Now, sometimes in my sorrow shut,
  Or breaking into song by fits,
  Alone, alone, to where he sits,
The Shadow cloaked from head to foot,

Who keeps the keys of all the creeds,
  I wander, often falling lame,
  And looking back to whence I came,
Or on to where the pathway leads;

And crying, How changed from where it ran
  Through lands where not a leaf was dumb,
  But all the lavish hills would hum
The murmur of a happy Pan;[6]

When each by turns was guide to each,
  And Fancy light from Fancy caught,
  And Thought leapt out to wed with Thought
Ere Thought could wed itself with Speech;

And all we met was fair and good,
  And all was good that Time could bring,
  And all the secret of the Spring
Moved in the chambers of the blood;

And many an old philosophy
On Argive[7] heights divinely sang,
  And round us all the thicket rang
To many a flute of Arcady.[8]

24

And was the day of my delight
  As pure and perfect as I say?
  The very source and fount of day

Is dashed with wandering isles of night.[9]

If all was good and fair we met,
  This earth had been the Paradise
  It never looked to human eyes
Since our first sun arose and set.

And is it that the haze of grief
  Makes former gladness loom so great?
  The lowness of the present state,
That sets the past in this relief?

Or that the past will always win
  A glory from its being far,
  And orb into the perfect star
We saw not when we moved therein?[1]

25

I know that this was Life—the track
  Whereon with equal feet we fared;
  And then, as now, the day prepared
The daily burden for the back.

But this it was that made me move
  As light as carrier birds in air;
  I loved the weight I had to bear,
Because it needed help of Love;

Nor could I weary, heart or limb,
  When mighty Love would cleave in twain
  The lading° of a single pain,
And part it, giving half to him.

26

Still onward winds the dreary way;
  I with it, for I long to prove
  No lapse of moons can canker Love,
Whatever fickle tongues may say.

And if that eye which watches guilt
  And goodness, and hath power to see
  Within the green the mouldered tree,
And towers fallen as soon as built—

O, if indeed that eye foresee
  Or see—in Him is no before—
  In more of life true life no more
And Love the indifference to be,

Then might I find, ere yet the morn
  Breaks hither over Indian seas,
  That Shadow waiting with the keys,
To shroud me from my proper scorn.[2]

27

I envy not in any moods
  The captive void of noble rage,
  The linnet born within the cage,
That never knew the summer woods;

I envy not the beast that takes
  His license in the field of time,
  Unfettered by the sense of crime,
To whom a conscience never wakes;

Nor, what may count itself as blest,

The heart that never plighted troth
But stagnates in the weeds of sloth;
Nor any want-begotten rest.[3]

I hold it true, whate'er befall;
I feel it, when I sorrow most;
'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.

28

The time draws near the birth of Christ.[4]
The moon is hid, the night is still;
The Christmas bells from hill to hill
Answer each other in the mist.
Four voices of four hamlets round,
From far and near, on mead and moor,
Swell out and fail, as if a door
Were shut between me and the sound;

Each voice four changes[5] on the wind,
That now dilate, and now decrease,
Peace and goodwill, goodwill and peace,
Peace and goodwill, to all mankind.

This year I slept and woke with pain,
I almost wished no more to wake,
And that my hold on life would break
Before I heard those bells again;

But they my troubled spirit rule,
For they controlled me when a boy;
They bring me sorrow touched with joy,
The merry, merry bells of Yule.

29

With such compelling cause to grieve
  As daily vexes household peace,
  And chains regret to his decease,
How dare we keep our Christmas eve;

Which brings no more a welcome guest
  To enrich the threshold of the night
  With showered largess of delight
In dance and song and game and jest?

Yet go, and while the holly boughs
  Entwine the cold baptismal font,
Make one wreath more for Use and Wont,[6]
That guard the portals of the house;

Old sisters of a day gone by,
  Gray nurses, loving nothing new;
  Why should they miss their yearly due
Before their time? They too will die.

30

With trembling fingers did we weave
  The holly round the Christmas hearth;
  A rainy cloud possessed the earth,
And sadly fell our Christmas eve.

At our old pastimes in the hall
  We gamboled, making vain pretense
  Of gladness, with an awful sense

Of one mute Shadow watching all.

We paused: the winds were in the beech;
  We heard them sweep the winter land;
  And in a circle hand-in-hand
Sat silent, looking each at each.

Then echo-like our voices rang;
  We sung, though every eye was dim,
  A merry song we sang with him
Last year; impetuously we sang.

We ceased; a gentler feeling crept
  Upon us: surely rest is meet.°
  "They rest," we said, "their sleep is sweet,"
And silence followed, and we wept.

Our voices took a higher range;
  Once more we sang: "They do not die
  Nor lose their mortal sympathy,
Nor change to us, although they change;

"Rapt from[7] the fickle and the frail
  With gathered power, yet the same,
  Pierces the keen seraphic flame
From orb to orb, from veil[8] to veil."

Rise, happy morn, rise, holy morn,
  Draw forth the cheerful day from night:
  O Father, touch the east, and light
The light that shone when Hope was born.

* * *

My own dim life should teach me this,
  That life shall live forevermore,
  Else earth is darkness at the core,
And dust and ashes all that is;

This round of green, this orb of flame,
  Fantastic beauty; such as lurks
  In some wild poet, when he works
Without a conscience or an aim.

What then were God to such as I?
  'Twere hardly worth my while to choose
  Of things all mortal, or to use
A little patience ere I die;

'Twere best at once to sink to peace,
Like birds the charming serpent[9] draws,
  To drop head-foremost in the jaws
Of vacant darkness and to cease.

35

Yet if some voice that man could trust
  Should murmur from the narrow house,
  "The cheeks drop in, the body bows;
Man dies, nor is there hope in dust";

Might I not say? "Yet even here,
  But for one hour, O Love, I strive
  To keep so sweet a thing alive."
But I should turn mine ears and hear

The moanings of the homeless sea,
  The sound of streams that swift or slow
Draw down Aeonian[1] hills, and sow

The dust of continents to be;

And Love would answer with a sigh,
"The sound of that forgetful shore[2]
  Will change my sweetness more and more,
Half-dead to know that I shall die."

O me, what profits it to put
  An idle case? If Death were seen
  At first as Death, Love had not been,
Or been in narrowest working shut,

Mere fellowship of sluggish moods,
Or in his coarsest Satyr-shape[3]
  Had bruised the herb and crushed the grape,
And basked and battened° in the woods.[4]

* * *

39

Old warder of these buried bones,
  And answering now my random stroke
  With fruitful cloud and living smoke,
Dark yew, that graspest at the stones

And dippest toward the dreamless head,
  To thee too comes the golden hour
When flower is feeling after flower;[5]
But Sorrow—fixed upon the dead,

And darkening the dark graves of men—
  What whispered from her lying lips?
Thy gloom is kindled at the tips,[6]

And passes into gloom again.

* * *

47

That each, who seems a separate whole,
Should move his rounds,[7] and fusing all
The skirts[8] of self again, should fall
Remerging in the general Soul,

Is faith as vague as all unsweet.
  Eternal form shall still divide
  The eternal soul from all beside;
And I shall know him when we meet;

And we shall sit at endless feast,
  Enjoying each the other's good.
  What vaster dream can hit the mood
Of Love on earth? He seeks at least

Upon the last and sharpest height,
  Before the spirits fade away,
  Some landing place, to clasp and say,
"Farewell! We lose ourselves in light."[9]

48

If these brief lays,[°] of Sorrow born,
  Were taken to be such as closed
  Grave doubts and answers here proposed,
Then these were such as men might scorn.

Her° care is not to part and prove;
  She takes, when harsher moods remit,
  What slender shade of doubt may flit,
And makes it vassal unto love;

And hence, indeed, she sports with words,
  But better serves a wholesome law,
  And holds it sin and shame to draw
The deepest measure from the chords;

Nor dare she trust a larger lay,
  But rather loosens from the lip
  Short swallow-flights of song, that dip
Their wings in tears, and skim away.

* * *

50

Be near me when my light is low,
  When the blood creeps, and the nerves prick
  And tingle; and the heart is sick,
And all the wheels of being slow.

Be near me when the sensuous frame
  Is racked with pangs that conquer trust;
  And Time, a maniac scattering dust,
And Life, a Fury slinging flame.

Be near me when my faith is dry,
  And men the flies of latter spring,
  That lay their eggs, and sting and sing
And weave their petty cells and die.

Be near me when I fade away,
  To point the term of human strife,
  And on the low dark verge of life
The twilight of eternal day.

* * *

54

O, yet we trust that somehow good
  Will be the final goal of ill,
  To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
  That not one life shall be destroyed,
  Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete;

That not a worm is cloven in vain;
  That not a moth with vain desire
  Is shriveled in a fruitless fire,
Or but° subserves another's gain.

Behold, we know not anything;
  I can but trust that good shall fall
  At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.

So runs my dream; but what am I?
  An infant crying in the night;
  An infant crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry.

55

The wish, that of the living whole
  No life may fail beyond the grave,
  Derives it not from what we have
The likest God within the soul?[1]

Are God and Nature then at strife,
  That Nature lends such evil dreams?
  So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life,

That I, considering everywhere
  Her secret meaning in her deeds,
  And finding that of fifty seeds
She often brings but one to bear,

I falter where I firmly trod,
  And falling with my weight of cares
  Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope through darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
  And gather dust and chaff, and call
  To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.[2]

56

"So careful of the type?" but no.
From scarpèd[3] cliff and quarried stone
  She[°] cries, "A thousand types are gone;
I care for nothing, all shall go.

"Thou makest thine appeal to me:
  I bring to life, I bring to death;
  The spirit does but mean the breath:
I know no more." And he, shall he,

Man, her last work, who seemed so fair,
  Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
  Who rolled the psalm to wintry skies,
Who built him fanes° of fruitless prayer,

Who trusted God was love indeed
  And love Creation's final law—
  Though Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shrieked against his creed—

Who loved, who suffered countless ills,
  Who battled for the True, the Just,
  Be blown about the desert dust,
Or sealed within the iron hills?[4]

No more? A monster then, a dream,
  A discord. Dragons of the prime,°
  That tare° each other in their slime,
Were mellow music matched with° him.

O life as futile, then, as frail!
  O for thy voice to soothe and bless!
  What hope of answer, or redress?
Behind the veil, behind the veil.

57

Peace; come away: the song of woe
  Is after all an earthly song.

Peace; come away: we do him wrong
To sing so wildly: let us go.

Come; let us go: your cheeks are pale;
Methinks my friend is richly shrined;
But half my life I leave behind.
But I shall pass, my work will fail.
Yet in these ears, till hearing dies,
One set slow bell will seem to toll
The passing of the sweetest soul
That ever looked with human eyes.

I hear it now, and o'er and o'er,
Eternal greetings to the dead;
And "Ave,° Ave, Ave," said,
"Adieu, adieu," forevermore.

58

In those sad words I took farewell.
Like echoes in sepulchral halls,
As drop by drop the water falls
In vaults and catacombs, they fell;

And, falling, idly broke the peace
Of hearts that beat from day to day,
Half-conscious of their dying clay,
And those cold crypts where they shall cease.

The high Muse answered: "Wherefore grieve
Thy brethren with a fruitless tear?
Abide a little longer here,
And thou shalt take a nobler leave."

59

O Sorrow, wilt thou live with me
  No casual mistress, but a wife,
  My bosom friend and half of life;
As I confess it needs must be?

O Sorrow, wilt thou rule my blood,
  Be sometimes lovely like a bride,
  And put thy harsher moods aside,
If thou wilt have me wise and good?

My centered passion cannot move,
  Nor will it lessen from today;
  But I'll have leave at times to play
As with the creature of my love;

And set thee forth, for thou art mine,
  With so much hope for years to come,
  That, howsoe'er I know thee, some
Could hardly tell what name were thine.

* * *

64

Dost thou look back on what hath been,
  As some divinely gifted man,
  Whose life in low estate began
And on a simple village green;

Who breaks his birth's invidious bar,
  And grasps the skirts of happy chance,
  And breasts the blows of circumstance,

And grapples with his evil star;

Who makes by force his merit known
And lives to clutch the golden keys,[5]
    To mold a mighty state's decrees,
And shape the whisper of the throne;

And moving up from high to higher,
    Becomes on Fortune's crowning slope
    The pillar of a people's hope,
The centre of a world's desire;

Yet feels, as in a pensive dream,
    When all his active powers are still,
    A distant dearness in the hill,
A secret sweetness in the stream,

The limit of his narrower fate,
    While yet beside its vocal springs
    He played at counselors and kings,
With one that was his earliest mate;

Who plows with pain his native lea
    And reaps the labour of his hands,
    Or in the furrow musing stands:
"Does my old friend remember me?"

* * *

67

When on my bed the moonlight falls,
    I know that in thy place of rest
By that broad water[6] of the west
There comes a glory on the walls:

Thy marble bright in dark appears,
  As slowly steals a silver flame
  Along the letters of thy name,
And o’er the number of thy years.

The mystic glory swims away,
  From off my bed the moonlight dies;
  And closing eaves of wearied eyes
I sleep till dusk is dipped in gray;

And then I know the mist is drawn
  A lucid veil from coast to coast,
  And in the dark church like a ghost
Thy tablet glimmers to the dawn.

* * *

70

I cannot see the features right,
  When on the gloom I strive to paint
  The face I know; the hues are faint
And mix with hollow masks of night;

Cloud-towers by ghostly masons wrought,
  A gulf that ever shuts and gapes,
  A hand that points, and pallèd° shapes
In shadowy thoroughfares of thought;

And crowds that stream from yawning doors,
  And shoals of puckered faces drive;
  Dark bulks that tumble half alive,
And lazy lengths on boundless shores;

Till all at once beyond the will
I hear a wizard music roll,
And through a lattice on the soul
Looks thy fair face and makes it still.

71

Sleep, kinsman thou to death and trance
And madness, thou has forged at last
A night-long present of the past
In which we went through summer France.[7]

Hadst thou such credit with the soul?
Then bring an opiate trebly strong,
Drug down the blindfold sense of wrong,
That so my pleasure may be whole;

While now we talk as once we talked
Of men and minds, the dust of change,
The days that grow to something strange,
In walking as of old we walked

Beside the river's wooded reach,
The fortress, and the mountain ridge,
The cataract flashing from the bridge,
The breaker breaking on the beach.

72

Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again,[8]
And howlest, issuing out of night,
With blasts that blow the poplar white,

And lash with storm the streaming pane?

Day, when my crowned estate[9] begun
To pine in that reverse of doom,[1]
  Which sickened every living bloom,
And blurred the splendor of the sun;

Who usherest in the dolorous hour
  With thy quick tears that make the rose
  Pull sideways, and the daisy close
Her crimson fringes to the shower;

Who mightst have heaved a windless flame
  Up the deep East, or, whispering, played
  A checker-work of beam and shade
Along the hills, yet looked the same,

As wan, as chill, as wild as now;
  Day, marked as with some hideous crime,
  When the dark hand struck down through time,
And canceled nature's best: but thou,

Lift as thou mayst thy burthened brows
  Through clouds that drench the morning star,
  And whirl the ungarnered sheaf afar,
And sow the sky with flying boughs,

And up thy vault with roaring sound
  Climb thy thick noon, disastrous day;
  Touch thy dull goal of joyless gray,
And hide thy shame beneath the ground.

* * *

I leave thy praises unexpressed
   In verse that brings myself relief,
   And by the measure of my grief
I leave thy greatness to be guessed.

What practice howsoe'er expert
   In fitting aptest words to things,
   Or voice the richest-toned that sings,
Hath power to give thee as thou wert?

I care not in these fading days
   To raise a cry that lasts not long,
   And round thee with the breeze of song
To stir a little dust of praise.

Thy leaf has perished in the green,
   And, while we breathe beneath the sun,
   The world which credits what is done
Is cold to all that might have been.

So here shall silence guard thy fame;
   But somewhere, out of human view,
   Whate'er thy hands are set to do
Is wrought with tumult of acclaim.

* * *

78

Again at Christmas[2] did we weave
   The holly round the Christmas hearth;
   The silent snow possessed the earth,
And calmly fell our Christmas eve.

The yule clog[°] sparkled keen with frost,

No wing of wind the region swept,
But over all things brooding slept
The quiet sense of something lost.

As in the winters left behind,
Again our ancient games had place,
The mimic picture's[3] breathing grace,
And dance and song and hoodman-blind.[4]

Who showed a token of distress?
No single tear, no mark of pain—
O sorrow, then can sorrow wane?
O grief, can grief be changed to less?

O last regret, regret can die!
No—mixed with all this mystic frame,
Her deep relations are the same,
But with long use her tears are dry.

* * *

82

I wage not any feud with Death
For changes wrought on form and face;
No lower life that earth's embrace
May breed with him can fright my faith.

Eternal process moving on,
From state to state the spirit walks;
And these are but the shattered stalks,
Or ruined chrysalis of one.

Nor blame I Death, because he bare
The use of virtue out of earth;

I know transplanted human worth
Will bloom to profit, otherwhere.

For this alone on Death I wreak
The wrath that garners in my heart:
He put our lives so far apart
We cannot hear each other speak.

83

Dip down upon the northern shore,
O sweet new-year° delaying long;
Thou doest expectant Nature wrong;
Delaying long, delay no more.

What stays thee from the clouded noons,
Thy sweetness from its proper place?
Can trouble live with April days,
Or sadness in the summer moons?

Bring orchis, bring the foxglove spire,
The little speedwell's° darling blue,
Deep tulips dashed with fiery dew,
Laburnums, dropping-wells of fire.

O thou, new-year, delaying long,
Delayest the sorrow in my blood,
That longs to burst a frozen bud
And flood a fresher throat with song.

84

When I contemplate all alone
The life that had been thine below,

And fix my thoughts on all the glow
To which thy crescent would have grown,

I see thee sitting crowned with good,
A central warmth diffusing bliss
In glance and smile, and clasp and kiss,
On all the branches of thy blood;

Thy blood, my friend, and partly mine;
For now the day was drawing on,
When thou shouldst link thy life with one
Of mine own house, and boys of thine

Had babbled "Uncle" on my knee;
But that remorseless iron hour
Made cypress of her orange flower,[5]
Despair of hope, and earth of thee.

I seem to meet their least desire,
To clap their cheeks, to call them mine.
I see their unborn faces shine
Beside the never-lighted fire.

I see myself an honored guest,
Thy partner in the flowery walk
Of letters, genial table talk,
Or deep dispute, and graceful jest;

While now thy prosperous labor fills
The lips of men with honest praise,
And sun by sun the happy days
Descend below the golden hills

With promise of a morn as fair;
And all the train of bounteous hours
Conduct, by paths of growing powers,
To reverence and the silver hair;

Till slowly worn her earthly robe,
  Her lavish mission richly wrought,
  Leaving great legacies of thought,
Thy spirit should fail from off the globe;

What time mine own might also flee,
  As linked with thine in love and fate,
  And, hovering o'er the dolorous strait
To the other shore, involved in thee,

Arrive at last the blessed goal,
  And He that died in Holy Land
  Would reach us out the shining hand,
And take us as a single soul.

What reed was that on which I leant?
  Ah, backward fancy, wherefore wake
  The old bitterness again, and break
The low beginnings of content?

* * *

86

Sweet after showers, ambrosial air,
  That rollest from the gorgeous gloom
  Of evening over brake° and bloom
And meadow, slowly breathing bare

The round of space,[6] and rapt below
  Through all the dewy-tasseled wood,
And shadowing down the hornèd flood[7]
In ripples, fan my brows and blow

The fever from my cheek, and sigh

The full new life that feeds thy breath
Throughout my frame, till Doubt and Death,
Ill brethren, let the fancy fly

From belt to belt of crimson seas
On leagues of odor streaming far,
To where in yonder orient star
A hundred spirits whisper "Peace."

87

I passed beside the reverend walls[8]
In which of old I wore the gown;
I roved at random through the town,
And saw the tumult of the halls;

And heard once more in college fanes°
The storm their high-built organs make,
And thunder-music, rolling, shake
The prophet blazoned on the panes;

And caught once more the distant shout,
The measured pulse of racing oars
Among the willows; paced the shores
And many a bridge, and all about

The same gray flats[9] again, and felt
The same, but not the same; and last
Up that long walk of limes I passed
To see the rooms in which he dwelt.

Another name was on the door.
I lingered; all within was noise
Of songs, and clapping hands, and boys
That crashed the glass and beat the floor;

Where once we held debate, a band
Of youthful friends,[1] on mind and art,
And labor, and the changing mart,
And all the framework of the land;

When one would aim an arrow fair,
But send it slackly from the string;
And one would pierce an outer ring,
And one an inner, here and there;

And last the master bowman, he,
Would cleave the mark. A willing ear
We lent him. Who but hung to hear
The rapt oration flowing free

From point to point, with power and grace
And music in the bounds of law,
To those conclusions when we saw
The God within him light his face,

And seem to lift the form, and glow
In azure orbits heavenly-wise;
And over those ethereal eyes
The bar of Michael Angelo?[2]

88

Wild bird,[3] whose warble, liquid sweet,
Rings Eden through the budded quicks,[°]
O tell me where the senses mix,
O tell me where the passions meet,

Whence radiate: fierce extremes employ
Thy spirits in the darkening leaf,

And in the midmost heart of grief
Thy passion clasps a secret joy;

And I—my harp would prelude woe—
I cannot all command the strings;
The glory of the sum of things
Will flash along the chords and go.

89

Witch elms that counterchange the floor
Of this flat lawn with dusk and bright;[4]
And thou, with all thy breadth and height
Of foliage, towering sycamore;

How often, hither wandering down,
My Arthur found your shadows fair,
And shook to all the liberal air
The dust and din and steam of town!

He brought an eye for all he saw;
He mixed in all our simple sports;
They pleased him, fresh from brawling courts
And dusty purlieus° of the law.[5]

O joy to him in this retreat,
Immantled in ambrosial dark,
To drink the cooler air, and mark
The landscape winking through the heat!

O sound to rout the brood of cares,
The sweep of scythe in morning dew,
The gust that round the garden flew,
And tumbled half the mellowing pears!

O bliss, when all in circle drawn
About him, heart and ear were fed
To hear him, as he lay and read
The Tuscan poets[6] on the lawn!

Or in the all-golden afternoon
A guest, or happy sister, sung,
Or here she brought the harp and flung
A ballad to the brightening moon.

Nor less it pleased in livelier moods,
Beyond the bounding hill to stray,
And break the livelong summer day
With banquet in the distant woods;

Whereat we glanced from theme to theme,
Discussed the books to love or hate,
Or touched the changes of the state,
Or threaded some Socratic dream;[7]

But if I praised the busy town,
He loved to rail against it still,
For "ground in yonder social mill
We rub each other's angles down,

"And merge," he said, "in form and gloss
The picturesque of man and man."
We talked: the stream beneath us ran,
The wine-flask lying couched in moss,

Or cooled within the glooming wave;
And last, returning from afar,
Before the crimson-circled star[8]
Had fallen into her father's[9] grave,

And brushing ankle-deep in flowers,
  We heard behind the woodbine veil
  The milk that bubbled in° the pail,
And buzzings of the honeyed hours.

* * *

91

When rosy plumelets tuft the larch,
  And rarely° pipes the mounted thrush,
  Or underneath the barren bush
Flits by the sea-blue bird° of March;

Come, wear the form by which I know
  Thy spirit in time among thy peers;
  The hope of unaccomplished years
Be large and lucid round thy brow.

When summer's hourly-mellowing change
  May breathe, with many roses sweet,
  Upon the thousand waves of wheat
That ripple round the lowly grange,°

Come; not in watches of the night,
  But where the sunbeam broodeth warm,
  Come, beauteous in thine after form,
And like a finer light in light.

* * *

93

I shall not see thee. Dare I say
  No spirit ever brake the band
  That stays him from the native land
Where first he walked when clasped in clay?[1]

No visual shade of someone lost,
  But he, the Spirit himself, may come
  Where all the nerve of sense is numb,
Spirit to Spirit, Ghost to Ghost.

Oh, therefore from thy sightless° range
  With gods in unconjectured bliss,
  Oh, from the distance of the abyss
Of tenfold-complicated change,

Descend, and touch, and enter; hear
  The wish too strong for words to name,
  That in this blindness of the frame°
My Ghost may feel that thine is near.

94

How pure at heart and sound in head,
  With what divine affections bold
  Should be the man whose thought would hold
An hour's communion with the dead.

In vain shalt thou, or any, call
  The spirits from their golden day,
  Except, like them, thou too canst say,
My spirit is at peace with all.

They haunt the silence of the breast,
  Imaginations calm and fair,
  The memory like a cloudless air,

The conscience as a sea at rest;

But when the heart is full of din,
  And doubt beside the portal waits,
  They can but listen at the gates,
And hear the household jar° within.

95

By night we lingered on the lawn,
  For underfoot the herb was dry;
  And genial warmth; and o'er the sky
The silvery haze of summer drawn;

And calm that let the tapers burn
  Unwavering: not a cricket chirred;
  The brook alone far off was heard,
And on the board the fluttering urn.[2]

And, bats went round in fragrant skies,
  And wheeled or lit the filmy shapes[3]
  That haunt the dusk, with ermine capes
And woolly breasts and beaded eyes;

While now we sang old songs that pealed
  From knoll to knoll, where, couched at ease,
  The white kine° glimmered, and the trees
Laid their dark arms[4] about the field.

But when those others, one by one,
  Withdrew themselves from me and night,
  And in the house light after light
Went out, and I was all alone,

A hunger seized my heart; I read

Of that glad year which once had been,
In those fallen leaves which kept their green,
The noble letters of the dead.

And strangely on the silence broke
The silent-speaking words, and strange
Was love's dumb cry defying change
To test his worth; and strangely spoke

The faith, the vigor, bold to dwell
On doubts that drive the coward back,
And keen through wordy snares to track
Suggestion to her inmost cell.

So word by word, and line by line,
The dead man touched me from the past,
And all at once it seemed at last
The[5] living soul was flashed on mine.

And mine in this was wound, and whirled
About empyreal° heights of thought,
And came on that which is, and caught
The deep pulsations of the world,

Aeonian music[6] measuring out
The steps of Time—the shocks of Chance—
The blows of Death. At length my trance
Was canceled, stricken through with doubt.[7]

Vague words! but ah, how hard to frame
In matter-molded forms of speech,
Or even for intellect to reach
Through memory that which I became.

Till now the doubtful dusk revealed
The knolls once more where, couched at ease,

The white kine glimmered, and the trees
Laid their dark arms about the field;

And sucked from out the distant gloom
A breeze began to tremble o'er
The large leaves of the sycamore,
And fluctuate all the still perfume,

And gathering freshlier overhead,
Rocked the full-foliaged elms, and swung
The heavy-folded rose, and flung
The lilies to and fro, and said,

"The dawn, the dawn," and died away;
And East and West, without a breath,
Mixed their dim lights, like life and death,
To broaden into boundless day.

96

You say, but with no touch of scorn,
Sweet-hearted, you,[8] whose light blue eyes
Are tender over drowning flies,
You tell me, doubt is Devil-born.

I know not: one indeed I knew
In many a subtle question versed,
Who touched a jarring lyre at first,
But ever strove to make it true;

Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out.
There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

He fought his doubts and gathered strength,
  He would not make his judgment blind,
  He faced the specters of the mind
And laid them; thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own,
  And Power was with him in the night,
  Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone,

But in the darkness and the cloud,
  As over Sinaï's peaks of old,
  While Israel made their gods of gold,
Although the trumpet blew so loud.[9]

* * *

99

Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again,[1]
  So loud with voices of the birds,
  So thick with lowings of the herds,
Day, when I lost the flower of men;

Who tremblest through thy darkling red
  On yon swollen brook that bubbles fast[2]
  By meadows breathing of the past,
And woodlands holy to the dead;

Who murmurest in the foliage eaves
  A song that slights the coming care,[3]
  And Autumn laying here and there
A fiery finger on the leaves;

Who wakenest with thy balmy breath
To myriads on the genial° earth,
Memories of bridal, or of birth,[4]
And unto myriads more, of death.

Oh, wheresoever those[5] may be,
Betwixt the slumber of the poles,
Today they count as kindred souls;
They know me not, but mourn with me.

* * *

103

On that last night before we went
From out the doors where I was bred,[6]
I dreamed a vision of the dead,
Which left my after-morn content.

Methought I dwelt within a hall,
And maidens with me; distant hills
From hidden summits fed with rills
A river sliding by the wall.

The hall with harp and carol rang.
They sang of what is wise and good
And graceful. In the center stood
A statue veiled, to which they sang;

And which, though veiled, was known to me,
The shape of him I loved, and love
Forever. Then flew in a dove
And brought a summons from the sea;

And when they learnt that I must go,
  They wept and wailed, but led the way
  To where the little shallop° lay
At anchor in the flood below;

And on by many a level mead,°
  And shadowing bluff that made the banks,
  We glided winding under ranks
Of iris and the golden reed;

And still as vaster grew the shore
  And rolled the floods in grander space,
  The maidens gathered strength and grace
And presence, lordlier than before;

And I myself, who sat apart
  And watched them, waxed° in every limb;
  I felt the thews of Anakim,[7]
The pulses of a Titan's[8] heart;

As one would sing the death of war,
  And one would chant the history
  Of that great race which is to be,[9]
And one the shaping of a star;

Until the forward-creeping tides
  Began to foam, and we to draw
  From deep to deep, to where we saw
A great ship lift her shining sides.[1]

The man we loved was there on deck,
  But thrice as large as man he bent
  To greet us. Up the side I went,
And fell in silence on his neck;

Whereat those maidens with one mind
  Bewailed their lot; I did them wrong:
  "We served thee here," they said, "so long,
And wilt thou leave us now behind?"

So rapt° I was, they could not win
  An answer from my lips, but he
  Replying, "Enter likewise ye
And go with us:" they entered in.

And while the wind began to sweep
  A music out of sheet and shroud,
  We steered her toward a crimson cloud
That landlike slept along the deep.

104

The time draws near the birth of Christ;[2]
  The moon is hid, the night is still;
  A single church below the hill
Is pealing, folded in the mist.

A single peal of bells below,
  That wakens at this hour of rest
  A single murmur in the breast,
That these are not the bells I know.

Like strangers' voices here they sound,
  In lands where not a memory strays,
  Nor landmark breathes of other days,
But all is new unhallowed ground.

105

Tonight ungathered let us leave
  This laurel, let this holly stand:[3]
  We live within the stranger's land,
And strangely falls our Christmas eve.

Our father's dust is left alone
  And silent under other snows:
  There in due time the woodbine blows,°
The violet comes, but we are gone.

No more shall wayward grief abuse
  The genial hour with mask and mime;
  For change of place, like growth of time,
Has broke the bond of dying use.

Let cares that petty shadows cast,
  By which our lives are chiefly proved,
  A little spare the night I loved,
And hold it solemn to the past.

But let no footstep beat the floor,
  Nor bowl of wassail mantle warm;[4]
  For who would keep an ancient form
Through which the spirit breathes no more?

Be neither song, nor game, nor feast;
  Nor harp be touched, nor flute be blown;
  No dance, no motion, save alone
What lightens in the lucid east

Of rising worlds[5] by yonder wood.
  Long sleeps the summer in the seed;
  Run out your measured arcs, and lead
The closing cycle rich in good.

106

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times:
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
  The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
  Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.[6]

107

It is the day when he was born.°
  A bitter day that early sank
  Behind a purple-frosty bank
Of vapor, leaving night forlorn.

The time admits not flowers or leaves
  To deck the banquet. Fiercely flies
  The blast of North and East, and ice
Makes daggers at the sharpened eaves,

And bristles all the brakes° and thorns
  To yon hard crescent, as she hangs
  Above the wood which grides[7] and clangs
Its leafless ribs and iron horns

Together, in the drifts[8] that pass
  To darken on the rolling brine
  That breaks the coast. But fetch the wine,
Arrange the board and brim the glass;

Bring in great logs and let them lie,
  To make a solid core of heat;
  Be cheerful-minded, talk and treat
Of all things even as he were by;

We keep the day. With festal cheer,
  With books and music, surely we

Will drink to him, whate'er he be,
And sing the songs he loved to hear.

108

I will not shut me from my kind,
And, lest I stiffen into stone,
I will not eat my heart alone,
Nor feed with sighs a passing wind:

What profit lies in barren faith,
And vacant yearning, though with might
To scale the heaven's highest height,
Or dive below the wells of Death?

What find I in the highest place,
But mine own phantom chanting hymns?
And on the depths of death there swims
The reflex of a human face.°

I'll rather take what fruit may be
Of sorrow under human skies:
'Tis held that sorrow makes us wise,
Whatever wisdom sleep with thee.°

109

Heart-affluence in discursive talk
From household fountains never dry;
The critic clearness of an eye
That saw through all the Muses' walk;[9]

Seraphic intellect and force

To seize and throw the doubts of man;
Impassioned logic, which outran
The hearer in its fiery course;

High nature amorous of the good,
But touched with no ascetic gloom;
And passion pure in snowy bloom
Through all the years of April blood;

A love of freedom rarely felt,
Of freedom in her regal seat
Of England; not the schoolboy heat,
The blind hysterics of the Celt;[1]

And manhood fused with female grace
In such a sort, the child would twine
A trustful hand, unasked, in thine,
And find his comfort in thy face;

All these have been, and thee mine eyes
Have looked on: if they looked in vain,
My shame is greater who remain,
Nor let thy wisdom make me wise.

* * *

115

Now fades the last long streak of snow,
Now burgeons every maze of quick°
About the flowering squares,° and thick
By ashen roots the violets blow.

Now rings the woodland loud and long,
The distance takes a lovelier hue,

And drowned in yonder living blue
The lark becomes a sightless song.

Now dance the lights on lawn and lea,
The flocks are whiter down the vale,
And milkier every milky sail
On winding stream or distant sea;

Where now the seamew° pipes, or dives
In yonder greening gleam, and fly
The happy birds, that change their sky
To build and brood, that live their lives

From land to land; and in my breast
Spring wakens too, and my regret
Becomes an April violet,
And buds and blossoms like the rest.

* * *

118

Contèmplate all this work of Time,
The giant laboring in his youth;
Nor dream of human love and truth,
As dying Nature's earth and lime;[2]

But trust that those we call the dead
Are breathers of an ampler day
For ever nobler ends. They° say,
The solid earth whereon we tread

In tracts of fluent heat began,
And grew to seeming-random forms,
The seeming prey of cyclic storms,

Till at the last arose the man;

Who throve and branched from clime to clime,
  The herald of a higher race,
  And of himself in higher place
If so he type[3] this work of time

Within himself, from more to more;
  Or, crowned with attributes of woe
  Like glories, move his course, and show
That life is not as idle ore,

But iron dug from central gloom,
  And heated hot with burning fears,
  And dipped in baths of hissing tears,
And battered with the shocks of doom

To shape and use. Arise and fly
The reeling Faun,[4] the sensual feast;
  Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.

119

Doors,[5] where my heart was used to beat
  So quickly, not as one that weeps
  I come once more; the city sleeps;
I smell the meadow in the street;

I hear a chirp of birds; I see
  Betwixt the black fronts long-withdrawn
  A light blue lane of early dawn,
And think of early days and thee,

And bless thee, for thy lips are bland,°

And bright the friendship of thine eye;
And in my thoughts with scarce a sigh
I take the pressure of thine hand.

120

I trust I have not wasted breath:
I think we are not wholly brain,
Magnetic mockeries;[6] not in vain,
Like Paul[7] with beasts, I fought with Death;

Not only cunning° casts in clay:
Let Science prove we are, and then
What matters Science unto men,
At least to me? I would not stay.

Let him, the wiser man who springs
Hereafter, up from childhood shape
His action like the greater ape,
But I was *born* to other things.

121

Sad Hesper° o'er the buried sun
And ready, thou, to die with him,
Thou watchest all things ever dim
And dimmer, and a glory done.

The team is loosened from the wain,°
The boat is drawn upon the shore;
Thou listenest to the closing door,
And life is darkened in the brain.

Bright Phosphor,° fresher for the night,
  By thee the world's great work is heard
  Beginning, and the wakeful bird;
Behind thee comes the greater light.[8]

The market boat is on the stream,
  And voices hail it from the brink;
  Thou hear'st the village hammer clink,
And see'st the moving of the team.

Sweet Hesper-Phosphor, double name[9]
  For what is one, the first, the last,
  Thou, like my present and my past,
Thy place is changed; thou art the same.

* * *

123

There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
  O earth, what changes hast thou seen!
  There where the long street roars hath been
The stillness of the central sea.[1]

The hills are shadows, and they flow
  From form to form, and nothing stands;
  They melt like mist, the solid lands,
Like clouds they shape themselves and go.

But in my spirit will I dwell,
  And dream my dream, and hold it true;
  For though my lips may breathe adieu,
I cannot think the thing farewell.

That which we dare invoke to bless;
  Our dearest faith; our ghastliest doubt;
  He, They, One, All; within, without;
The Power in darkness whom we guess—

I found Him not in world or sun,
  Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye,[2]
  Nor through the questions men may try,
The petty cobwebs we have spun.

If e'er when faith had fallen asleep,
  I heard a voice, "believe no more,"
  And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep,

A warmth within the breast would melt
  The freezing reason's colder part,
  And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answered, "I have felt."[3]

No, like a child in doubt and fear:
  But that blind clamor made me wise;
  Then was I as a child that cries,
But, crying, knows his father near;

And what I am beheld again
  What is, and no man understands;
  And out of darkness came the hands
That reach through nature, molding men.

* * *

Love is and was my lord and king,
And in his presence I attend
To hear the tidings of my friend,
Which every hour his couriers bring.

Love is and was my king and lord,
And will be, though as yet I keep
Within the court on earth, and sleep
Encompassed by his faithful guard,

And hear at times a sentinel
Who moves about from place to place,
And whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night, that all is well.

127

And all is well, though faith and form[4]
Be sundered in the night of fear;
Well roars the storm to those that hear
A deeper voice across the storm,

Proclaiming social truth shall spread,
And justice, even though thrice again
The red fool-fury of the Seine[5]
Should pile her barricades with dead.[6]

But ill for him that wears a crown,
And him, the lazar,[7] in his rags!
They tremble, the sustaining crags;
The spires of ice are toppled down,

And molten up, and roar in flood;
The fortress crashes from on high,

The brute earth lightens[8] to the sky,
And the great Aeon[9] sinks in blood,

And compassed by the fires of hell,
While thou, dear spirit, happy star,
O'erlook'st the tumult from afar,
And smilest, knowing all is well.

* * *

129

Dear friend, far off, my lost desire,
So far, so near in woe and weal,°
O loved the most, when most I feel
There is a lower and a higher;

Known and unknown, human, divine;
Sweet human hand and lips and eye;
Dear heavenly friend that canst not die,
Mine, mine, forever, ever mine;

Strange friend, past, present, and to be;
Loved deeplier, darklier understood;
Behold, I dream a dream of good,
And mingle all the world with thee.

130

Thy voice is on the rolling air
I hear thee where the waters run;
Thou standest in the rising sun,
And in the setting thou art fair.

What art thou then? I cannot guess;
  But though I seem in star and flower
  To feel thee some diffusive power,
I do not therefore love thee less.

My love involves the love before;
  My love is vaster passion now;
  Tho’ mix’d with God and Nature thou,
I seem to love thee more and more.

Far off thou art, but ever nigh;
  I have thee still, and I rejoice;
  I prosper, circled with thy voice;
I shall not lose thee tho’ I die.

131

O living will[1] that shalt endure
  When all that seems shall suffer shock,
  Rise in the spiritual rock,[2]
Flow through our deeds and make them pure,

That we may lift from out of dust
  A voice as unto him that hears,
  A cry above the conquered years
To one that with us works, and trust,

With faith that comes of self-control,
  The truths that never can be proved
  Until we close with all we loved,
And all we flow from, soul in soul.

From Epilogue[3]

* * *

And rise, O moon, from yonder down,
Till over down and over dale
All night the shining vapor sail
And pass the silent-lighted town,

The white-faced halls, the glancing rills,
And catch at every mountain head,
And o'er the friths[4] that branch and spread
Their sleeping silver through the hills;

And touch with shade the bridal doors,
With tender gloom the roof, the wall;
And breaking let the splendor fall
To spangle all the happy shores

By which they rest, and ocean sounds,
And, star and system rolling past,
A soul shall draw from out the vast
And strike his being into bounds,

And, moved through life of lower phase,
Result in man,[5] be born and think,
And act and love, a closer link
Betwixt us and the crowning race

Of those that, eye to eye, shall look
On knowledge; under whose command
Is Earth and Earth's, and in their hand
Is Nature like an open book;

No longer half-akin to brute,
For all we thought and loved and did,
And hoped, and suffered, is but seed
Of what in them is flower and fruit;

Whereof the man that with me trod
This planet was a noble type°
Appearing ere the times were ripe,
That friend of mine who lives in God,

That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

1833–50 1850

Endnotes

- Note 1: He died 1833 (Latin).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare John 20:24–29, in which Jesus rebukes Thomas for his doubts concerning the Resurrection: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The sun and moon (according to Tennyson's note).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Of religion and philosophy.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: As in the days of fixed religious faith.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Identified by Tennyson as the German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The ancient yew tree, growing in the grounds near the clock tower and church where Hallam was to be buried, seems neither to blossom in spring nor to change from its dark mournful color in summer. "Thousand years": compare Book of Common Prayer, Psalm 90: "For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Water can be brought below freezing-point and not turn into ice—if it be kept still; but if it be moved suddenly it turns

into ice and may break a vase [*Tennyson's note*].Return to reference 8

- Note 9: Sailors buried at sea were often wrapped in their own hammocks.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: According to his son, Tennyson discovered that he had been writing a letter to Hallam during the very hour in which his friend died.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The house on Wimpole Street, in London, where Hallam had lived.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Hallam expressed enthusiasm for Tennyson's early poetry in a review written in 1831.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Hallam's body was conveyed back to England by ship from Trieste, Italy.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Reference to a burial inside a church building rather than in the churchyard.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: By 1850 the accepted pronunciation of "quay" would rhyme with *key*, but Tennyson reverts to an earlier pronunciation, *kay.*Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, a calm sea.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Hallam died at Vienna on the river Danube. His burial place is on the banks of the Severn, a tidal river in the southwest of England.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A tributary of the Severn.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The water of the Wye River is dammed up as the tide flows in, and its sound is silenced until, with the turn of the tide, its "wave" once more becomes "vocal"; these stanzas were written at Tintern Abbey in the Wye valley.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The poet assumes that the burial was in the churchyard; in fact, on January 3, 1834, at St. Andrews in Clevedon, Somersetshire, Hallam's body was interred in a vault inside the church.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Astronomical instruments, such as telescopes.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Probably alluding to the discovery in 1846 of the planet Neptune and one of its moons.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Hallam died just before the beginning of autumn (September 15, 1833) in the fifth year of the friendship.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In Greek mythology the god of woods and pastures.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Of Argos, an ancient city-state in the northeastern Peloponnesus; more generally, Greek.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A sheep-raising region in Greece associated with pastoral poetry.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Moving spots on the sun.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The poet wonders whether Earth would have the deceptive appearance of being a perfect orb if viewed from afar, on another planet.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The Deity, being outside time, sees (rather than foresees) whether or not the rest of life ("more of life," line 11) will be pointless. If pointless, then the way for the speaker to deal with his self-scorn ("proper scorn") might be to seek death.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Complacency resulting from some deficiency ("want").Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The first Christmas after Hallam's death (1833); the setting is Tennyson's family home in Lincolnshire.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Different sequences in which church bells are pealed.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Personifying the spirits who expect customary observances of the Christmas season to be followed.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Carried away from.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: An image representing the boundary between different worlds, especially that between Earth and heaven (see section 56, line 28). "From orb to orb": the angelic spirit ("flame") of the dead moves from star to star.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Some snakes are reputed to capture their prey by hypnotizing it.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Eons old, seemingly everlasting.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: That is, of Lethe, the river in the classical underworld whose water caused forgetfulness.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In Greek mythology satyrs were half-man, half-beast (goat or horse) in appearance, desires, and behavior.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Lines 18–24 may be paraphrased: if we knew death to be final and that no afterlife were possible, love could not exist except on a primitive or bestial level.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The ancient yew tree in the graveyard was described in section 2 as never changing. Now the poet discovers that in the flowering season, if the tree is struck ("my random stroke"), it gives off a cloud of golden pollen.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Only the tips of the yew branches are in flower.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, go through the customary circuit of life.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Outer edges or fringes.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: These lines express the hope that, as Tennyson wrote, "individuality lasts after death, and we are not utterly absorbed into the Godhead. If we are to be finally merged into the Universal Soul, Love asks to have at least one more parting before we lose ourselves."Return to reference 9
- Note 1: According to Tennyson, the "inner conscience—the divine in man."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: As expressed in lines 1 and 2.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Cut away so that the strata are exposed.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Preserved like fossils in rock.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Badges of high public office.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The Severn River.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In the summer of 1830 Hallam and Tennyson went through southern France en route to Spain.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: September 15, 1834, the first anniversary of Hallam's death.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: State of happiness.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: The reversal or disaster that doom brought upon him when Hallam died.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The second Christmas (1834) after Hallam's death.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A game in which the participants pose in the manner of some famous statue or painting and the spectators try to guess what work of art is being portrayed.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The player in the game of blindman's buff who wears a blindfold or hood.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Orange blossoms are associated with brides—here the poet's sister Emily Tennyson, to whom Hallam had been engaged. Cypress branches are associated with funerals.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The "ambrosial air" is slowly clearing the clouds from the sky.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Between two promontories [*Tennyson's note*].Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Of Trinity College, Cambridge University.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Areas of low, level ground.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The Apostles, an undergraduate club to which Tennyson and Hallam had belonged.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Hallam, like the Italian artist Michelangelo (1475–1564), had a prominent ridge of bone above his eyes.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Probably a nightingale.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Shadows of the elm tree checker the lawn at Somersby, the Tennysons' country home.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Hallam became a law student in London after leaving Cambridge.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A group of 13th- and 14th-century poets in central Italy (Tuscany); the best-known of them are Dante and Petrarch.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, worked our way through some discourse of Socrates (as recorded by Plato).Return to reference 7

- Note 8: Venus, which will sink into the west as the Sun has done.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: According to the nebular hypothesis, planets condensed out of the Sun's atmosphere; in this sense the Sun is the "father" of planets.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, when he was alive and in fleshly form.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Vessel for boiling water for tea or coffee, heated by a fluttering flame.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The white-winged night moths called ermine moths.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Cast the shadows of their branches.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: "His" in the 1st edition. Also in the 1st edition, line 37 read: "And mine in his was wound."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Music of the universe, which has pulsated for eons.Return to reference 6
- Note 7:
  In a letter of 1874, replying to an inquiry about his experience of mystical trances, Tennyson wrote: "A kind of waking trance I have frequently had, quite up from boyhood, when I have been all alone. This has generally come upon me through repeating my own name two or three times to myself silently, till all at once, as it were out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality, the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being, and this not a confused state, but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, the weirdest of the weirdest, utterly beyond words, where death was an almost laughable impossibility, the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction but the only true life. . . . This might . . . be the state which St. Paul describes, 'Whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell.' . . . I am ashamed of my feeble description. Have I not said the state is utterly beyond words? But in a moment, when I come back to my normal state of 'sanity,' I am ready to fight for *mein*

liebes Ich [my dear self], and hold that it will last for aeons of aeons" *(Alfred Lord Tennyson, A Memoir,* 1897, vol. 1, 320). Return to reference 7

- Note 8: A woman of simple faith.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: After veiling Mount Sinai in a "thick cloud" and signifying the divine presence by "the voice of the trumpet" (Exodus 19:16), God addresses Moses from the "thick darkness" (20:21). Meanwhile Aaron made, and the Israelites worshiped, a golden calf (32:1–6).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: September 15, 1835, the second anniversary of Hallam's death.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, reflections of the clouded red light of dawn quiver on the surface of the fast-moving water.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, that disregards future events such as death or the coming of autumn.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Compare with "Epilogue," lines 117–28 (p. 279).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, the many who remember death.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In 1837 Tennyson and his family moved away from their home in Lincolnshire, which had been closely associated with his friendship with Hallam. In section 104 the move seems to occur in 1835, the year of the third Christmas after Hallam's death.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Plural of *Anak;* a reference to the giant sons of Anak (see Numbers 13:33).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Giant of Greek mythology.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: See the account of the "crowning race" in "Epilogue," lines 128–44.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Compare *The Passing of Arthur*, lines 361–469, in which Bedivere is left behind as Arthur's barge, the ship of death, sails away. In the present dream vision the speaker is taken aboard, as are his companions, who represent the creative arts of this world—"all the human powers and talents that do not pass with

life but go along with it," as Tennyson said of this passage.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: The third Christmas (1835) after Hallam's death.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Compare section 29, in which the family in their former home still continued to gather holly. In the new home the customary observances lapse.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, let no bowl of hot punch warm the mantelpiece.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The scintillating motion of the stars that rise [*Tennyson's note*].Return to reference 5
- Note 6: These allusions to the second coming of Christ and to the millennium are derived from Revelation 20, but Tennyson has interpreted the biblical account in his own way. He once told his son of his conviction that "the forms of Christian religion would alter; but that the spirit of Christ would still grow from more to more."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Clashes with a strident noise.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Either cloud drifts or clouds of snow.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The realm of art and literature.Return to reference 9
- Note 1:
  From the 18th century onward, the word *Celtic* had been used as a descriptor of the family of languages that included Welsh, Cornish, Irish, and Gaelic. In the spurious slippage from language to ethnicity or "race" that was common in the 19th and 20th centuries, the term *Celt* was frequently applied to anyone who spoke (or was descended from those who spoke) a Celtic language. Tennyson here uses it as a synonym for "Irish." See Arnold's description of the Irish temperament as "Celtic" in *On the Study of Celtic Literature*.
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Two of the perishable organic ingredients of the human body.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Emulate, prefigure as a type.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: In Roman mythology a half-human, half-beast deity of the woods and mountains.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The doors of Hallam's house on London's Wimpole Street. See section 7.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Mechanisms operated by responses to electrical forces.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: 1 Corinthians 15:32.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Compare Genesis 1:16: "the greater light to rule the day."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The planet Venus, named for the Roman goddess of love, is both the evening star and the morning star (visible at different times in different seasons).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In a passage from *The Principles of Geology* (1832), a book well known to Tennyson, Sir Charles Lyell discusses the "interchange of sea and land" that has occurred "on the surface of our globe": "In the Mediterranean alone, many flourishing inland towns and a still greater number of ports now stand where the sea rolled its waves since the era when civilized nations first grew in Europe."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: He does not discover satisfactory proof of God's existence in the 18th-century argument that because objects in nature are designed there must exist a designer.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Compare the sentiment here with Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (1833–34), "The Everlasting No."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Traditional institutions through which faith was formerly expressed, such as the Church.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The river that runs through Paris.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Reference to revolutionary uprisings in France, in each of which a king lost his throne (line 9): in 1789 against Louis XVI, in 1830 against Charles X, and in 1848 against Louis-Philippe. If, as Tennyson recollected, section 127 was finished at a date earlier than 1848, the reference to three revolutions (line 6) was prophetic.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Pauper suffering from disease.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Is lit up by fire.Return to reference 8

- Note 9: A vast tract of time, here perhaps modern Western civilization.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Tennyson later commented that he meant here the moral will of humankind.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Christ. Compare 1 Corinthians 10:4: "And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The Epilogue describes the wedding day of Tennyson's sister Cecilia to Edmund Lushington. At the conclusion (printed here) the speaker reflects on the moonlit wedding night and the kind of offspring that will result from their union.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Inlets of the sea.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A child will be conceived and will develop in embryo through various stages. This development is similar to human evolution from the animal to the human level and perhaps to a future higher stage of development.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *desolated*Return to reference °
- °: *envying*Return to reference °
- °: *Sorrow*Return to reference °
- °: *mourning garments*Return to reference °
- °: *husks*Return to reference °
- °: *toasts*Return to reference °
- °: *heavily weighted*Return to reference °
- °: *arranging*Return to reference °
- °: *ribbon*Return to reference °
- °: *alights*Return to reference °
- °: *morning star*Return to reference °
- °: *seaweed*Return to reference °
- °: *open countryside*Return to reference °
- °: *open sea*Return to reference °

- °: *shore*Return to reference °
- °: *the ship*Return to reference °
- °: *small birds*Return to reference °
- °: *burden*Return to reference °
- °: *proper, appropriate*Return to reference °
- °: *grown fat*Return to reference °
- °: *songs*Return to reference °
- °: *Sorrow's*Return to reference °
- °: *only*Return to reference °
- °: *nature*Return to reference °
- °: *temples*Return to reference °
- °: *primeval age*Return to reference °
- °: *tore (archaic)*Return to reference °
- °: *compared to*Return to reference °
- °: *Hail (Latin)*Return to reference °
- °: *shadowy*Return to reference °
- °: *log*Return to reference °
- °: *spring 1835*Return to reference °
- °: *spring flower*Return to reference °
- °: *thicket*Return to reference °
- °: *chapels*Return to reference °
- °: *hawthorn hedges*Return to reference °
- °: *regions*Return to reference °
- °: *into*Return to reference °
- °: *exquisitely*Return to reference °
- °: *kingfisher*Return to reference °
- °: *outlying farmhouse*Return to reference °
- °: *invisible*Return to reference °
- °: *human body*Return to reference °
- °: *noise*Return to reference °
- °: *cows*Return to reference °
- °: *heavenly*Return to reference °
- °: *generative*Return to reference °
- °: *light open boat*Return to reference °
- °: *meadow*Return to reference °
- °: *grown*Return to reference °

- °: *entranced* Return to reference °
- °: *blooms* Return to reference °
- °: *February 1* Return to reference °
- °: *thickets* Return to reference °
- °: *his own face* Return to reference °
- °: *Hallam* Return to reference °
- °: *hawthorn hedge* Return to reference °
- °: *fields* Return to reference °
- °: *seabird* Return to reference °
- °: *scientists* Return to reference °
- °: *gentle* Return to reference °
- °: *skillful* Return to reference °
- °: *evening star* Return to reference °
- °: *hay wagon* Return to reference °
- °: *morning star* Return to reference °
- °: *happiness* Return to reference °
- °: *model, example* Return to reference °

The Charge of the Light Brigade[1]

1

Half a league,[2] half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.[3]
"Forward the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!" he said.
Into the valley of Death[4]
Rode the six hundred.

2

"Forward, the Light Brigade!"
Was there a man dismayed?
Not though the soldier knew
Someone had blundered.
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die.
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

3

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,

Into the mouth of hell
Rode the six hundred.

4

Flashed all their sabers bare,
Flashed as they turned in air
Sab'ring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wondered.
Plunged in the battery smoke
Right through the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reeled from the saber stroke
Shattered and sundered.
Then they rode back, but not,
Not the six hundred.

5

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell.
They that had fought so well
Came through the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

6

When can their glory fade?

O the wild charge they made!
All the world wondered.
Honor the charge they made!
Honor the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred!

1854 1854

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  During the Crimean War (1854–56), owing to confusion of orders, a brigade of British cavalry charged some entrenched batteries of Russian artillery. This blunder cost the lives of three-quarters of the six hundred horsemen engaged (see Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The Reason Why*, 1954). Tennyson rapidly composed his "ballad" (as he called the poem) after reading an account of the battle in a newspaper.
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: About a mile and a half.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In the recording Tennyson made of this poem, *hundred* sounds like "hunderd"—a Lincolnshire pronunciation that reinforces the rhyme with *thundered*, etc.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: See Psalms 23:4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death."Return to reference 4

The Defence of Lucknow[1]

I

Banner of England, not for a season, O banner of Britain, hast thou
Floated in conquering battle or flapt to the battle-cry!
Never with mightier glory than when we had rear'd thee on high
Flying at top of the roofs in the ghastly siege of Lucknow—
Shot thro' the staff or the halyard,[2] but ever we raised thee anew,
And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England blew.

II

Frail were the works that defended the hold that we held with our lives—
Women and children among us, God help them, our children and wives!
Hold it we might—and for fifteen days or for twenty at most.[3]
'Never surrender, I charge you, but every man die at his post!'
Voice of the dead whom we loved, our Lawrence[4] the best of the brave:
Cold were his brows when we kiss'd him—we laid him that night in his grave.
'Every man die at his post!' and there hail'd on our houses and halls
Death from their rifle-bullets, and death from their cannon-balls,
Death in our innermost chamber, and death at our slight barricade,
Death while we stood with the musket, and death while we stoopt to the spade,
Death to the dying, and wounds to the wounded, for often there fell
Striking the hospital wall, crashing thro' it, their shot and their shell,
Death—for their spies were among us, their marksmen were told of our best,
So that the brute bullet broke thro' the brain that could think for the rest;
Bullets would sing by our foreheads, and bullets would rain at our feet—
Fire from ten thousand at once of the rebels that girdled us round—
Death at the glimpse of a finger from over the breadth of a street,
Death from the heights of the mosque and the palace, and death in the ground!
Mine? yes, a mine! Countermine![5] down, down! and creep thro' the hole!

Keep the revolver in hand! You can hear him—the murderous mole.
Quiet, ah! quiet—wait till the point of the pickaxe be thro'!
Click with the pick, coming nearer and nearer again than before—
Now let it speak, and you fire, and the dark pioneer is no more;
And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England blew.

III

Ay, but the foe sprung his mine many times, and it chanced on a day
Soon as the blast of that underground thunderclap echo'd away,
Dark thro' the smoke and the sulphur like so many fiends in their hell—
Cannon-shot, musket-shot, volley on volley, and yell upon yell—
Fiercely on all the defences our myriad enemy fell.
What have they done? where is it? Out yonder. Guard the Redan![6]
Storm at the Water-gate! storm at the Bailey-gate! storm, and it ran
Surging and swaying all round us, as ocean on every side
Plunges and heaves at a bank that is daily drown'd by the tide—
So many thousands that if they be bold enough, who shall escape?
Kill or be kill'd, live or die, they shall know we are soldiers and men!
Ready! take aim at their leaders—their masses are gapp'd with our grape°
—
Backward they reel like the wave, like the wave flinging forward again,
Flying and foil'd at the last by the handful they could not subdue;
And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England blew.

IV

Handful of men as we were, we were English in heart and in limb,
Strong with the strength of the race to command, to obey, to endure,
Each of us fought as if hope for the garrison hung but on him;
Still—could we watch at all points? we were every day fewer and fewer.
There was a whisper among us, but only a whisper that past:
'Children and wives—if the tigers leap into the fold unawares—
Every man die at his post—and the foe may outlive us at last—
Better to fall by the hands that they love, than to fall into theirs!'
Roar upon roar in a moment two mines by the enemy sprung
Clove into perilous chasms our walls and our poor palisades.
Rifleman, true is your heart, but be sure that your hand be as true!
Sharp is the fire of assault, better aim'd are your flank fusillades—
Twice do we hurl them to earth from the ladders to which they had clung,

Twice from the ditch where they shelter we drive them with hand-
grenades;
And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England blew.

V

Then on another wild morning another wild earthquake out-tore
Clean from our lines of defence ten or twelve good paces or more.
Rifleman, high on the roof, hidden there from the light of the sun—
One has leapt up on the breach, crying out: 'Follow me, follow me!'—
Mark him—he falls! then another, and *him* too, and down goes he.
Had they been bold enough then, who can tell but the traitors had won?
Boardings and rafters and doors—an embrasure! make way for the gun!
Now double-charge it with grape! It is charged and we fire, and they run.
Praise to our Indian brothers,[7] and let the dark face have his due!
Thanks to the kindly dark faces who fought with us, faithful and few,
Fought with the bravest among us, and drove them, and smote them, and
slew,
That ever upon the topmost roof our banner in India blew.

VI

Men will forget what we suffer and not what we do. We can fight;
But to be soldier all day and be sentinel all thro' the night—
Ever the mine and assault, our sallies, their lying alarms.
Bugles and drums in the darkness, and shoutings and soundings to arms,
Ever the labour of fifty that had to be done by five,
Ever the marvel among us that one should be left alive,
Ever the day with its traitorous death from the loopholes around,
Ever the night with its coffinless corpse to be laid in the ground,
Heat like the mouth of a hell, or a deluge of cataract skies,
Stench of old offal decaying, and infinite torment of flies,
Thoughts of the breezes of May blowing over an English field,
Cholera, scurvy, and fever, the wound that *would* not be heal'd,
Lopping away of the limb by the pitiful-pitiless knife,—
Torture and trouble in vain,—for it never could save us a life,
Valour of delicate women who tended the hospital bed,
Horror of women in travail among the dying and dead,
Grief for our perishing children, and never a moment for grief,
Toil and ineffable weariness, faltering hopes of relief,

Havelock[8] baffled, or beaten, or butcher'd for all that we knew—
Then day and night, day and night, coming down on the still-shatter'd walls
Millions of musket-bullets, and thousands of cannonballs—
But ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England blew.

VII

Hark cannonade, fusillade! is it true what was told by the scout?
Outram[9] and Havelock breaking their way thro' the fell mutineers!
Surely the pibroch[1] of Europe is ringing again in our ears!
All on a sudden the garrison utter a jubilant shout,
Havelock's glorious Highlanders[2] answer with conquering cheers,
Forth from their holes and their hidings our women and children come out,
Blessing the wholesome white faces of Havelock's good fusileers,
Kissing the war-harden'd hand of the Highlander wet with their tears!
Dance to the pibroch!—saved! we are saved!—is it you? is it you?
Saved by the valour of Havelock, saved by the blessing of Heaven!
'Hold it for fifteen days!' we have held it for eighty-seven!
And ever aloft on the palace roof the old banner of England blew.

1879

Endnotes

- Note 1: The siege of Lucknow took place when Indian soldiers attacked the British governmental headquarters in the city of Lucknow as part of the Indian uprising against British rule in 1857.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A rope used for raising or lowering a flag.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The siege went on for nearly six months, from May 30 to November 27, 1857.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Sir Henry Lawrence, who took over the command at Lucknow six weeks before the siege began. He was wounded by a shell and died on July 4.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The rebelling forces dug mines, or tunnels, under the residency; the defenders dug countermines in order to attack underground.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: An arrow-shaped embankment.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Indian soldiers serving in the British army who defended the British.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Major General Sir Henry Havelock recaptured Cawnpore and sought to recapture Lucknow as well. He died of dysentery inside the blockade shortly after the siege was lifted.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Major General Sir James Outram worked with Havelock to retake Lucknow.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A form of music played on bagpipes.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The 78th (Highlanders) Regiment was a Scottish regiment that helped defend the residency.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *cannon fire*Return to reference °

Crossing the Bar[1]

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,[2]
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For though from out our bourne° of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar.

1889 1889

Endnotes

- Note 1: Although not the last poem written by Tennyson, "Crossing the Bar" appears, at his request, as the final poem in all collections of his work.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Mournful sound of the ocean beating on a sandbar at the mouth of a harbor.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *boundary*Return to reference °

CHARLES DARWIN
1809–1882

Of all the many works in this volume, those of Charles Darwin have had the greatest impact not just on the development of literature, but on the science, politics, and worldview of our current times. We are still working through the full consequences of his understanding of the mutability of species and their competition for survival. It is true that terrible crimes have been committed as a result of misapplying Darwin's ideas—in the form of eugenics, for example, or what been (mis)named "social Darwinism." But at the same time, Darwin helped reveal a natural world dazzling in its beauty, complexity, and interconnectedness. Other natural historians working in the mid-nineteenth century developed related accounts of the variation of species, and even their mutability. But no one else had the breadth of vision to see the interconnections between the mutability of the environment and the mutability of species.

The fifth child of Robert Waring Darwin and Susanna Wedgwood (whose father, Josiah Wedgwood, designed the antislavery medallion referenced on p. 345, below), Darwin grew up in affluent circumstances. His father was the principal physician for the market town of Shrewsbury, in western England. A sizable inheritance combined with advantageous investments resulted in a substantial fortune. Darwin's independent income enabled him to follow his passions: he developed an interest in geology and biology at Cambridge, where he was studying to become a clergyman.

Recognizing his own lack of religious vocation—and ultimately his inability to believe in orthodox Christianity—he chose instead to follow his passion for natural history. He had the good fortune to be invited on what was supposed to be a two-year trip to Terra del Fuego as the H.M.S. *Beagle*'s naturalist and collector. The voyage ultimately lasted five years and, according to his *Autobiography* (1887), "determined my whole career." Not only did Darwin visit some of the most isolated—and so most scientifically significant—places on the globe but he also had experiences that affected his ability to imagine the mutability of the natural world. The consequences of an earthquake in Concepción, for example, showed him both the powerlessness of people in the face of horrible catastrophe, and the extent to which the land itself is constantly shifting and changing. Meanwhile, witnessing the horrors of slavery close at hand confirmed him in his lifelong opposition to the practice.

Although Darwin began speculating about transmutation during his travels and continued his research upon his return, it was not until he read Thomas Malthus's *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798) that he began to understand the role of overpopulation in natural selection. According to Malthus, because human fecundity is always in excess of possible increases in food production, overpopulation is inevitable—hence the recurring cycles of famine, plague, and war. Darwin took this insight and applied it to the entirety of the natural world: as he wrote in *The Origin of Species*, "We behold the face of nature bright with gladness, we often see superabundance of food; we do not see, or we forget, that the birds which are idly singing round us mostly live on insects or seeds, and are thus constantly destroying life; or we forget how largely these songsters, or their eggs, or their nestlings are destroyed by birds and beasts of prey." The overabundance of nature—the ability of a single tree to produce thousands of seeds, or a single bird to lay dozens of eggs—is simply the necessary consequence of the fact that nearly all those seeds and all those eggs will die before they have the opportunity to reproduce.

On the one hand, this insight begins to suggest the extraordinary interdependence of all life: in one famous passage Darwin relates the number of cats in a given district to the number of mice to the number of humble-bees (bumblebees) to the number of red clover. "[I]t is quite credible that the presence of a feline animal in large numbers in a district might determine, through the intervention first of mice and then of bees, the frequency of certain flowers in that district!" On the other hand, understanding the "struggle for existence" begins to suggest how species might change over time, since any advantage due to chance variations might be sufficient to ensure the survival of that organism's offspring over another's.

Despite constant experimentation and a long list of publications, Darwin did not publish his theories about the transmutation of species until 1859, over twenty years after his return from his trip on the *Beagle*. *The Origin of Species* made Darwin both famous and controversial. The opposition aroused by Darwin's treatise came from two different quarters. The first consisted of some of his fellow scientists, who considered his theory to be unsound. The second consisted of religious leaders who attacked his theory because it seemed to contradict a literal interpretation of the Bible. Sometimes the two kinds of opposition combined forces, as in 1860 when his scientific opponents selected Bishop Wilberforce to be their spokesman in spearheading their attack on *The Origin of Species.* In replying to such attacks, Darwin was supported by two of the ablest popularizers of science in his day, T. H. Huxley and John Tyndall. Moreover, although shy by temperament, Darwin was himself an exceptionally effective expositor of his own theories.

After he published *The Origin of Species,* Darwin wrote several treatises, some of which develop and clarify the theory of natural selection. One of these works, *The Descent of Man* (1871), was especially provocative in its stress on the similarities between humans and animals and in its naturalistic explanations of the beautiful colorings of birds, insects, and flowers. While many religious authorities pointed to the tail feathers of the peacock, for example, as evidence of God's goodness, Darwin saw evidence only

of "sexual selection," or the advantage decoration would give to males of the species in finding a mate.

Darwin rightly saw himself as a scientist and for the most part restricted his attention to observations about the natural world. At the same time, his work clearly refuted so-called "scientific racism," which claimed (erroneously) that the races are biologically distinct. This false notion was used as a justification for the enslavement of people of African descent. Darwin, however, proved that all people have a single origin. The notion that "the survival of the fittest" could be used to explain activities within and between human societies and cultures—what came to be known in the late nineteenth century as "social Darwinism"—was primarily the product of other writers, most notably Herbert Spencer (1820–1903).

Darwin was by all accounts a genial father and husband as well as a devoted recluse—partly as a result of ongoing ill health. His home was constructed around his experiments, with greenhouses, experimental garden beds, and breeding pens for birds and animals. His children often helped with his experiments, and one of the pleasures of his *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) is reading his observations of his children's facial expressions. So entwined were Darwin's home life and his scientific projects that his children appear to have regarded the one as a natural extension of the other: upon being given a tour of a neighbor's house one of the children asked, "where does he do his barnacles?"

Darwin died at home at the age of seventy-three. He was buried in Westminster Abbey close to the monument to Sir Isaac Newton.

From On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection

From *Chapter 3. Struggle for Existence*

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It may be asked, how is it that varieties, which I have called incipient species, become ultimately converted into good and distinct species, which in most cases obviously differ from each other far more than do the varieties of the same species? How do those groups of species, which constitute what are called distinct genera, and which differ from each other more than do the species of the same genus, arise? All these results, as we shall more fully see in the next chapter, follow inevitably from the struggle for life. Owing to this struggle for life, any variation, however slight and from whatever cause proceeding, if it be in any degree profitable to an individual of any species, in its infinitely complex relations to other organic beings and to external nature, will tend to the preservation of that individual, and will generally be inherited by its offspring. The offspring, also, will thus have a better chance of surviving, for, of the many individuals of any species which are periodically born, but a small number can survive. I have called this principle, by which each slight variation, if useful, is preserved, by the term of Natural Selection, in order to mark its relation to man's power of selection. We have seen that man by selection can certainly produce great results, and can adapt organic beings to his own uses, through the accumulation of slight but useful variations, given to him by the hand of Nature. But Natural Selection, as we shall hereafter see, is a power incessantly ready for action, and is as immeasurably superior to man's feeble efforts, as the works of Nature are to those of Art.

* * * Nothing is easier than to admit in words the truth of the universal struggle for life, or more difficult—at least I have found it so—than constantly to bear this conclusion in mind. Yet unless it be thoroughly engrained in the mind, I am convinced that the whole economy of nature, with every fact on distribution, rarity, abundance, extinction, and variation, will be dimly seen or quite misunderstood. We behold the face of nature bright with gladness,

we often see superabundance of food; we do not see, or we forget, that the birds which are idly singing round us mostly live on insects or seeds, and are thus constantly destroying life; or we forget how largely these songsters, or their eggs, or their nestlings, are destroyed by birds and beasts of prey; we do not always bear in mind, that though food may be now superabundant, it is not so at all seasons of each recurring year.

I should premise that I use the term Struggle for Existence in a large and metaphorical sense, including dependence of one being on another, and including (which is more important) not only the life of the individual, but success in leaving progeny. Two canine animals in a time of dearth, may be truly said to struggle with each other which shall get food and live. But a plant on the edge of a desert is said to struggle for life against the drought, though more properly it should be said to be dependent on the moisture. A plant which annually produces a thousand seeds, of which on an average only one comes to maturity, may be more truly said to struggle with the plants of the same and other kinds which already clothe the ground. The missletoe is dependent on the apple and a few other trees, but can only in a far-fetched sense be said to struggle with these trees, for if too many of these parasites grow on the same tree, it will languish and die. But several seedling missletoes, growing close together on the same branch, may more truly be said to struggle with each other. As the missletoe is disseminated by birds, its existence depends on birds; and it may metaphorically be said to struggle with other fruit-bearing plants, in order to tempt birds to devour and thus disseminate its seeds rather than those of other plants. In these several senses, which pass into each other, I use for convenience sake the general term of struggle for existence.

A struggle for existence inevitably follows from the high rate at which all organic beings tend to increase. Every being, which during its natural lifetime produces several eggs or seeds, must suffer destruction during some period of its life, and during some season or occasional year, otherwise, on the principle of geometrical increase, its numbers would quickly become so inordinately great that no

country could support the product. Hence, as more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, there must in every case be a struggle for existence, either one individual with another of the same species, or with the individuals of distinct species, or with the physical conditions of life. It is the doctrine of Malthus[1] applied with manifold force to the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms; for in this case there can be no artificial increase of food, and no prudential restraint from marriage. Although some species may be now increasing, more or less rapidly, in numbers, all cannot do so, for the world would not hold them.

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I am tempted to give one more instance showing how plants and animals, most remote in the scale of nature, are bound together by a web of complex relations. I shall hereafter have occasion to show that the exotic Lobelia fulgens, in this part of England, is never visited by insects, and consequently, from its peculiar structure, never can set a seed. Many of our orchidaceous plants absolutely require the visits of moths to remove their pollen-masses and thus to fertilise them. I have, also, reason to believe that humble-bees are indispensable to the fertilisation of the heartsease (Viola tricolor), for other bees do not visit this flower. From experiments which I have tried, I have found that the visits of bees, if not indispensable, are at least highly beneficial to the fertilisation of our clovers; but humble-bees alone visit the common red clover (Trifolium pratense), as other bees cannot reach the nectar. Hence I have very little doubt, that if the whole genus of humble-bees became extinct or very rare in England, the heartsease and red clover would become very rare, or wholly disappear. The number of humble-bees in any district depends in a great degree on the number of field-mice, which destroy their combs and nests; and Mr. H. Newman, who has long attended to the habits of humble-bees, believes that "more than two-thirds of them are thus destroyed all over England." Now the number of mice is largely dependent, as every one knows, on the

number of cats; and Mr. Newman says, "Near villages and small towns I have found the nests of humble-bees more numerous than elsewhere, which I attribute to the number of cats that destroy the mice." Hence it is quite credible that the presence of a feline animal in large numbers in a district might determine, through the intervention first of mice and then of bees, the frequency of certain flowers in that district!

In the case of every species, many different checks, acting at different periods of life, and during different seasons or years, probably come into play; some one check or some few being generally the most potent, but all concurring in determining the average number or even the existence of the species. In some cases it can be shown that widely-different checks act on the same species in different districts. When we look at the plants and bushes clothing an entangled bank, we are tempted to attribute their proportional numbers and kinds to what we call chance. But how false a view is this! Every one has heard that when an American forest is cut down, a very different vegetation springs up; but it has been observed that the trees now growing on the ancient Indian mounds, in the Southern United States, display the same beautiful diversity and proportion of kinds as in the surrounding virgin forests. What a struggle between the several kinds of trees must here have gone on during long centuries, each annually scattering its seeds by the thousand; what war between insect and insect—between insects, snails, and other animals with birds and beasts of prey—all striving to increase, and all feeding on each other or on the trees or their seeds and seedlings, or on the other plants which first clothed the ground and thus checked the growth of the trees! Throw up a handful of feathers, and all must fall to the ground according to definite laws; but how simple is this problem compared to the action and reaction of the innumerable plants and animals which have determined, in the course of centuries, the proportional numbers and kinds of trees now growing on the old Indian ruins!

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We can see that when a plant or animal is placed in a new country amongst new competitors, though the climate may be exactly the same as in its former home, yet the conditions of its life will generally be changed in an essential manner. If we wished to increase its average numbers in its new home, we should have to modify it in a different way to what we should have done in its native country; for we should have to give it some advantage over a different set of competitors or enemies.

It is good thus to try in our imagination to give any form some advantage over another. Probably in no single instance should we know what to do, so as to succeed. It will convince us of our ignorance on the mutual relations of all organic beings; a conviction as necessary, as it seems to be difficult to acquire. All that we can do, is to keep steadily in mind that each organic being is striving to increase at a geometrical ratio; that each at some period of its life, during some season of the year, during each generation or at intervals, has to struggle for life, and to suffer great destruction. When we reflect on this struggle, we may console ourselves with the full belief, that the war of nature is not incessant, that no fear is felt, that death is generally prompt, and that the vigorous, the healthy, and the happy survive and multiply.

Endnotes

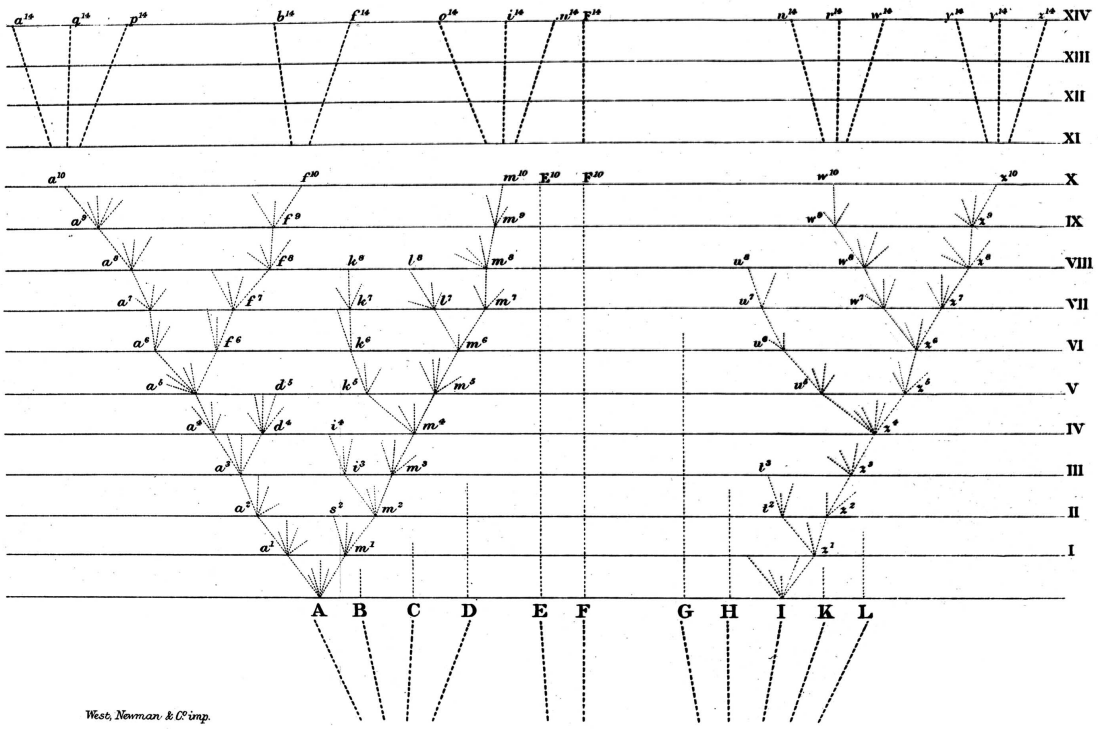
- Note 1:
  Thomas Malthus (1766–1834) formulated a highly influential theory of population growth that states that while human population grows at a geometric rate, the food supply can only ever increase at an arithmetic rate. The consequence, Malthus argues, is that overpopulation is inevitable, as are the famine, disease, war, and vice that accompany it. One of Darwin's signal achievements was to see the relevance of this theory for all organic beings.
  Return to reference 1

From *Chapter 14. Conclusion*

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I have now recapitulated the chief facts and considerations which have thoroughly convinced me that species have changed, and are still slowly changing by the preservation and accumulation of successive slight favourable variations. Why, it may be asked, have all the most eminent living naturalists and geologists rejected this view of the mutability of species? It cannot be asserted that organic beings in a state of nature are subject to no variation; it cannot be proved that the amount of variation in the course of long ages is a limited quantity; no clear distinction has been, or can be, drawn between species and well-marked varieties. It cannot be maintained that species when intercrossed are invariably sterile, and varieties invariably fertile; or that sterility is a special endowment and sign of creation. The belief that species were immutable productions was almost unavoidable as long as the history of the world was thought to be of short duration; and now that we have acquired some idea of the lapse of time, we are too apt to assume, without proof, that the geological record is so perfect that it would have afforded us plain evidence of the mutation of species, if they had undergone mutation.

But the chief cause of our natural unwillingness to admit that one species has given birth to other and distinct species, is that we are always slow in admitting any great change of which we do not see the intermediate steps. The difficulty is the same as that felt by so many geologists, when Lyell[2] first insisted that long lines of inland cliffs had been formed, and great valleys excavated, by the slow action of the coast-waves. The mind cannot possibly grasp the full meaning of the term of a hundred million years; it cannot add up and perceive the full effects of many slight variations, accumulated during an almost infinite number of generations.



This diagram from *On the Origin of Species* was drawn by William West to show how similarities between species can be explained by Darwin's theory of descent.

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In the distant future I see open fields for far more important researches. Psychology will be based on a new foundation, that of the necessary acquirement of each mental power and capacity by gradation. Light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history.

Authors of the highest eminence seem to be fully satisfied with the view that each species has been independently created. To my mind it accords better with what we know of the laws impressed on matter by the Creator, that the production and extinction of the past and present inhabitants of the world should have been due to secondary causes, like those determining the birth and death of the individual. When I view all beings not as special creations, but as the lineal descendants of some few beings which lived long before the first bed of the Silurian system[3] was deposited, they seem to me to

become ennobled. Judging from the past, we may safely infer that not one living species will transmit its unaltered likeness to a distant futurity. And of the species now living very few will transmit progeny of any kind to a far distant futurity; for the manner in which all organic beings are grouped, shows that the greater number of species of each genus, and all the species of many genera, have left no descendants, but have become utterly extinct. We can so far take a prophetic glance into futurity as to foretel that it will be the common and widely-spread species, belonging to the larger and dominant groups, which will ultimately prevail and procreate new and dominant species. As all the living forms of life are the lineal descendants of those which lived long before the Silurian epoch, we may feel certain that the ordinary succession by generation has never once been broken, and that no cataclysm has desolated the whole world. Hence we may look with some confidence to a secure future of equally inappreciable length. And as natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress towards perfection.

It is interesting to contemplate an entangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing on the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us. These laws, taken in the largest sense, being Growth with Reproduction; Inheritance which is almost implied by reproduction; Variability from the indirect and direct action of the external conditions of life, and from use and disuse; a Ratio of Increase so high as to lead to a Struggle for Life, and as a consequence to Natural Selection, entailing Divergence of Character and the Extinction of less-improved forms. Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows. There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the

fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.

1859

Endnotes

- Note 2: Sir Charles Lyell (1797–1875), Scottish naturalist who developed and disseminated the theory that the earth's visible characteristics are the products of geologic processes that took place over extremely long periods of time.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A geologic period of the Paleozoic Era spanning from 443.8 million years ago to 419.2 million years ago. Terrestrial life came into existence during this period.Return to reference 3

From The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex

From *Chapter 4. Comparison of the Mental Powers of Man and the Lower Animals*

I fully subscribe to the judgment of those writers who maintain that of all the differences between man and the lower animals, the moral sense or conscience is by far the most important. This sense, as Mackintosh remarks, "has a rightful supremacy over every other principle of human action;"[1] it is summed up in that short but imperious word *ought*, so full of high significance. It is the most noble of all the attributes of man, leading him without a moment's hesitation to risk his life for that of a fellow-creature; or after due deliberation, impelled simply by the deep feeling of right or duty, to sacrifice it in some great cause. Immanuel Kant exclaims, "Duty! Wondrous thought, that workest neither by fond insinuation, flattery, nor by any threat, but merely by holding up thy naked law in the soul, and so extorting for thyself always reverence, if not always obedience; before whom all appetites are dumb, however secretly they rebel; whence thy original?"

This great question has been discussed by many writers of consummate ability; and my sole excuse for touching on it, is the impossibility of here passing it over; and because, as far as I know, no one has approached it exclusively from the side of natural history. The investigation possesses, also, some independent interest, as an attempt to see how far the study of the lower animals throws light on one of the highest psychical faculties of man.

The following proposition seems to me in a high degree probable —namely, that any animal whatever, endowed with well-marked social instincts, the parental and filial affections being here included, would inevitably acquire a moral sense or conscience, as soon as its intellectual powers had become as well, or nearly as well developed, as in man. For, *firstly*, the social instincts lead an animal to take pleasure in the society of its fellows, to feel a certain amount of sympathy with them, and to perform various services for them. The services may be of a definite and evidently instinctive nature; or there may be only a wish and readiness, as with most of the higher

social animals, to aid their fellows in certain general ways. But these feelings and services are by no means extended to all the individuals of the same species, only to those of the same association. *Secondly*, as soon as the mental faculties had become highly developed, images of all past actions and motives would be incessantly passing through the brain of each individual; and that feeling of dissatisfaction, or even misery, which invariably results, as we shall hereafter see, from any unsatisfied instinct, would arise, as often as it was perceived that the enduring and always present social instinct had yielded to some other instinct, at the time stronger, but neither enduring in its nature, nor leaving behind it a very vivid impression. It is clear that many instinctive desires, such as that of hunger, are in their nature of short duration; and after being satisfied, are not readily or vividly recalled. *Thirdly*, after the power of language had been acquired, and the wishes of the community could be expressed, the common opinion how each member ought to act for the public good, would naturally become in a paramount degree the guide to action. But it should be borne in mind that however great weight we may attribute to public opinion, our regard for the approbation and disapprobation of our fellows depends on sympathy, which, as we shall see, forms an essential part of the social instinct, and is indeed its foundation-stone. *Lastly*, habit in the individual would ultimately play a very important part in guiding the conduct of each member; for the social instinct, together with sympathy, is, like any other instinct, greatly strengthened by habit, and so consequently would be obedience to the wishes and judgment of the community. Those several subordinate propositions must now be discussed, and some of them at considerable length.

It may be well first to premise that I do not wish to maintain that any strictly social animal, if its intellectual faculties were to become as active and as highly developed as in man, would acquire exactly the same moral sense as ours. In the same manner as various animals have some sense of beauty, though they admire widely different objects, so they might have a sense of right and wrong, though led by it to follow widely different lines of conduct. If, for

instance, to take an extreme case, men were reared under precisely the same conditions as hive-bees, there can hardly be a doubt that our unmarried females would, like the worker-bees, think it a sacred duty to kill their brothers, and mothers would strive to kill their fertile daughters; and no one would think of interfering. Nevertheless, the bee, or any other social animal, would gain in our supposed case, as it appears to me, some feeling of right or wrong, or a conscience. For each individual would have an inward sense of possessing certain stronger or more enduring instincts, and others less strong or enduring; so that there would often be a struggle as to which impulse should be followed; and satisfaction, dissatisfaction, or even misery would be felt, as past impressions were compared during their incessant passage through the mind. In this case an inward monitor would tell the animal that it would have been better to have followed the one impulse rather than the other. The one course ought to have been followed, and the other ought not; the one would have been right and the other wrong; but to these terms I shall recur.

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It has often been assumed that animals were in the first place rendered social, and that they feel as a consequence uncomfortable when separated from each other, and comfortable whilst together; but it is a more probable view that these sensations were first developed, in order that those animals which would profit by living in society, should be induced to live together, in the same manner as the sense of hunger and the pleasure of eating were, no doubt, first acquired in order to induce animals to eat. The feeling of pleasure from society is probably an extension of the parental or filial affections, since the social instinct seems to be developed by the young remaining for a long time with their parents; and this extension may be attributed in part to habit, but chiefly to natural selection. With those animals which were benefited by living in close association, the individuals which took the greatest pleasure in

society would best escape various dangers; whilst those that cared least for their comrades, and lived solitary, would perish in greater numbers. With respect to the origin of the parental and filial affections, which apparently lie at the base of the social instincts, we know not the steps by which they have been gained; but we may infer that it has been to a large extent through natural selection. So it has almost certainly been with the unusual and opposite feeling of hatred between the nearest relations, as with the worker-bees which kill their brother-drones, and with the queen-bees which kill their daughter-queens; the desire to destroy their nearest relations having been in this case of service to the community. Parental affection, or some feeling which replaces it, has been developed in certain animals extremely low in the scale, for example, in star-fishes and spiders. It is also occasionally present in a few members alone in a whole group of animals, as in the genus Forficula, or earwigs.

The all-important emotion of sympathy is distinct from that of love. A mother may passionately love her sleeping and passive infant, but she can hardly at such times be said to feel sympathy for it. The love of a man for his dog is distinct from sympathy, and so is that of a dog for his master. Adam Smith formerly argued, as has Mr. Bain[2] recently, that the basis of sympathy lies in our strong retentiveness of former states of pain or pleasure. Hence, "the sight of another person enduring hunger, cold, fatigue, revives in us some recollection of these states, which are painful even in idea." We are thus impelled to relieve the sufferings of another, in order that our own painful feelings may be at the same time relieved. In like manner we are led to participate in the pleasures of others. But I cannot see how this view explains the fact that sympathy is excited, in an immeasurably stronger degree, by a beloved, than by an indifferent person. The mere sight of suffering, independently of love, would suffice to call up in us vivid recollections and associations. The explanation may lie in the fact that, with all animals, sympathy is directed solely towards the members of the same community, and therefore towards known, and more or less beloved members, but not to all the individuals of the same species.

This fact is not more surprising than that the fears of many animals should be directed against special enemies. Species which are not social, such as lions and tigers, no doubt feel sympathy for the suffering of their own young, but not for that of any other animal. With mankind, selfishness, experience, and imitation, probably add, as Mr. Bain has shewn, to the power of sympathy; for we are led by the hope of receiving good in return to perform acts of sympathetic kindness to others; and sympathy is much strengthened by habit. In however complex a manner this feeling may have originated, as it is one of high importance to all those animals which aid and defend one another, it will have been increased through natural selection; for those communities, which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members, would flourish best, and rear the greatest number of offspring.

It is, however, impossible to decide in many cases whether certain social instincts have been acquired through natural selection, or are the indirect result of other instincts and faculties, such as sympathy, reason, experience, and a tendency to imitation; or again, whether they are simply the result of long-continued habit. So remarkable an instinct as the placing sentinels to warn the community of danger, can hardly have been the indirect result of any of these faculties; it must, therefore, have been directly acquired. On the other hand, the habit followed by the males of some social animals of defending the community, and of attacking their enemies or their prey in concert, may perhaps have originated from mutual sympathy; but courage, and in most cases strength, must have been previously acquired, probably through natural selection.

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Man a social animal.—Every one will admit that man is a social being. We see this in his dislike of solitude, and in his wish for society beyond that of his own family. Solitary confinement is one of the severest punishments which can be inflicted. Some authors suppose that man primevally lived in single families; but at the

present day, though single families, or only two or three together, roam the solitudes of some savage lands, they always, as far as I can discover, hold friendly relations with other families inhabiting the same district. Such families occasionally meet in council, and unite for their common defence. It is no argument against savage man being a social animal, that the tribes inhabiting adjacent districts are almost always at war with each other; for the social instincts never extend to all the individuals of the same species. Judging from the analogy of the majority of the Quadrumans, it is probable that the early ape-like progenitors of man were likewise social; but this is not of much importance for us. Although man, as he now exists, has few special instincts, having lost any which his early progenitors may have possessed, this is no reason why he should not have retained from an extremely remote period some degree of instinctive love and sympathy for his fellows. We are indeed all conscious that we do possess such sympathetic feelings; but our consciousness does not tell us whether they are instinctive, having originated long ago in the same manner as with the lower animals, or whether they have been acquired by each of us during our early years. As man is a social animal, it is almost certain that he would inherit a tendency to be faithful to his comrades, and obedient to the leader of his tribe; for these qualities are common to most social animals. He would consequently possess some capacity for self-command. He would from an inherited tendency be willing to defend, in concert with others, his fellow-men; and would be ready to aid them in any way, which did not too greatly interfere with his own welfare or his own strong desires.

The social animals which stand at the bottom of the scale are guided almost exclusively, and those which stand higher in the scale are largely guided, by special instincts in the aid which they give to the members of the same community; but they are likewise in part impelled by mutual love and sympathy, assisted apparently by some amount of reason. Although man, as just remarked, has no special instincts to tell him how to aid his fellow-men, he still has the impulse, and with his improved intellectual faculties would naturally

be much guided in this respect by reason and experience. Instinctive sympathy would also cause him to value highly the approbation of his fellows; for, as Mr. Bain has clearly shewn, the love of praise and the strong feeling of glory, and the still stronger horror of scorn and infamy, "are due to the workings of sympathy." Consequently man would be influenced in the highest degree by the wishes, approbation, and blame of his fellow-men, as expressed by their gestures and language. Thus the social instincts, which must have been acquired by man in a very rude state, and probably even by his early ape-like progenitors, still give the impulse to some of his best actions; but his actions are in a higher degree determined by the expressed wishes and judgment of his fellow-men, and unfortunately very often by his own strong selfish desires. But as love, sympathy and self-command become strengthened by habit, and as the power of reasoning becomes clearer, so that man can value justly the judgments of his fellows, he will feel himself impelled, apart from any transitory pleasure or pain, to certain lines of conduct. He might then declare—not that any barbarian or uncultivated man could thus think—I am the supreme judge of my own conduct, and in the words of Kant, I will not in my own person violate the dignity of humanity.

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Endnotes

- Note 1: This quotation is from Sir James Mackintosh's *Dissertation on the Progress of Ethical Philosophy* (1830). Mackintosh (1765–1832) was a politician, historian, jurist, and philosopher.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Alexander Bain (1818–1903) was a "mental philosopher" (or psychologist). Adam Smith (1723–1790) was an influential political economist and philosopher. Both were concerned with sympathy as a natural counter to human beings' innate selfishness.Return to reference 2

From *Chapter 7. Of the Races of Man*

It is not my intention here to describe the several so-called races of men; but I am about to enquire what is the value of the differences between them under a classificatory point of view, and how they have originated. In determining whether two or more allied forms ought to be ranked as species or varieties, naturalists are practically guided by the following considerations; namely, the amount of difference between them, and whether such differences relate to few or many points of structure, and whether they are of physiological importance; but more especially whether they are constant. Constancy of character is what is chiefly valued and sought for by naturalists. Whenever it can be shewn, or rendered probable, that the forms in question have remained distinct for a long period, this becomes an argument of much weight in favour of treating them as species. Even a slight degree of sterility between any two forms when first crossed, or in their offspring, is generally considered as a decisive test of their specific distinctness; and their continued persistence without blending within the same area, is usually accepted as sufficient evidence, either of some degree of mutual sterility, or in the case of animals of some mutual repugnance to pairing.

Independently of fusion from intercrossing, the complete absence, in a well-investigated region, of varieties linking together any two closely-allied forms, is probably the most important of all the criterions of their specific distinctness; and this is a somewhat different consideration from mere constancy of character, for two forms may be highly variable and yet not yield intermediate varieties. Geographical distribution is often brought into play unconsciously and sometimes consciously; so that forms living in two widely separated areas, in which most of the other inhabitants are specifically distinct, are themselves usually looked at as distinct; but in truth this affords no aid in distinguishing geographical races from so-called good or true species.

Now let us apply these generally-admitted principles to the races of man, viewing him in the same spirit as a naturalist would any other animal. In regard to the amount of difference between the races, we must make some allowance for our nice powers of discrimination gained by the long habit of observing ourselves. In India, as Elphinstone remarks, although a newly-arrived European cannot at first distinguish the various native races, yet they soon appear to him extremely dissimilar; and the Hindoo cannot at first perceive any difference between the several European nations. Even the most distinct races of man are much more like each other in form than would at first be supposed; certain negro tribes must be excepted, whilst others, as Dr. Rohlfs writes to me, and as I have myself seen, have Caucasian features. This general similarity is well shewn by the French photographs in the Collection Anthropologique du Muséum de Paris of the men belonging to various races, the greater number of which might pass for Europeans, as many persons to whom I have shewn them have remarked. Nevertheless, these men, if seen alive, would undoubtedly appear very distinct, so that we are clearly much influenced in our judgment by the mere colour of the skin and hair, by slight differences in the features, and by expression.

There is, however, no doubt that the various races, when carefully compared and measured, differ much from each other,—as in the texture of the hair, the relative proportions of all parts of the body, the capacity of the lungs, the form and capacity of the skull, and even in the convolutions of the brain. But it would be an endless task to specify the numerous points of difference. The races differ also in constitution, in acclimatisation and in liability to certain diseases. Their mental characteristics are likewise very distinct; chiefly as it would appear in their emotional, but partly in their intellectual faculties. Every one who has had the opportunity of comparison, must have been struck with the contrast between the taciturn, even morose, aborigines of S. America and the light-hearted, talkative negroes. There is a nearly similar contrast between the Malays and the Papuans, who live under the same

physical conditions, and are separated from each other only by a narrow space of sea.

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Our supposed naturalist having proceeded thus far in his investigation, would next enquire whether the races of men, when crossed, were in any degree sterile. He might consult the work of Professor Broca, a cautious and philosophical observer, and in this he would find good evidence that some races were quite fertile together, but evidence of an opposite nature in regard to other races. Thus it has been asserted that the native women of Australia and Tasmania rarely produce children to European men; the evidence, however, on this head has now been shewn to be almost valueless. The half-castes are killed by the pure blacks; and an account has lately been published of eleven half-caste youths murdered and burnt at the same time, whose remains were found by the police. Again, it has often been said that when mulattoes[3] intermarry they produce few children; on the other hand, Dr. Bachman of Charleston positively asserts that he has known mulatto families which have intermarried for several generations, and have continued on an average as fertile as either pure whites or pure blacks. Enquiries formerly made by Sir C. Lyell on this subject led him, as he informs me, to the same conclusion. In the United States the census for the year 1854 included, according to Dr. Bachman, 405,751 mulattoes; and this number, considering all the circumstances of the case, seems small; but it may partly be accounted for by the degraded and anomalous position of the class, and by the profligacy of the women. A certain amount of absorption of mulattoes into negroes must always be in progress; and this would lead to an apparent diminution of the former. The inferior vitality of mulattoes is spoken of in a trustworthy work as a well-known phenomenon; and this, although a different consideration from their lossened fertility, may perhaps be advanced as a proof of the specific distinctness of the parent races. No doubt both animal

and vegetable hybrids, when produced from extremely distinct species, are liable to premature death; but the parents of mulattoes cannot be put under the category of extremely distinct species. The common Mule[4] so notorious for long life and vigour, and yet so sterile, shews how little necessary connection there is in hybrids between lessened fertility and vitality; other analogous cases could be cited.

Even if it should hereafter be proved that all the races of men were perfectly fertile together, he who was inclined from other reasons to rank them as distinct species, might with justice argue that fertility and sterility are not safe criterions of specific distinctness. We know that these qualities are easily affected by changed conditions of life, or by close inter-breeding, and that they are governed by highly complex laws, for instance, that of the unequal fertility of converse crosses between the same two species. With forms which must be ranked as undoubted species, a perfect series exists from those which are absolutely sterile when crossed, to those which are almost or completely fertile. The degrees of sterility do not coincide strictly with the degrees of difference between the parents in external structure or habits of life. Man in many respects may be compared with those animals which have long been domesticated, and a large body of evidence can be advanced in favour of the Pallasian doctrine, that domestication tends to eliminate the sterility which is so general a result of the crossing of species in a state of nature. From these several considerations, it may be justly urged that the perfect fertility of the intercrossed races of man, if established, would not absolutely preclude us from ranking them as distinct species.

Independently of fertility, the characters presented by the offspring from a cross have been thought to indicate whether or not the parent-forms ought to be ranked as species or varieties; but after carefully studying the evidence, I have come to the conclusion that no general rules of this kind can be trusted. The ordinary result of a cross is the production of a blended or intermediate form; but in certain cases some of the offspring take closely after one parent-

form, and some after the other. This is especially apt to occur when the parents differ in characters which first appeared as sudden variations or monstrosities. I refer to this point, because Dr. Rohlfs informs me that he has frequently seen in Africa the offspring of negroes crossed with members of other races, either completely black or completely white, or rarely piebald. On the other hand, it is notorious that in America mulattoes commonly present an intermediate appearance.

We have now seen that a naturalist might feel himself fully justified in ranking the races of man as distinct species; for he has found that they are distinguished by many differences in structure and constitution, some being of importance. These differences have, also, remained nearly constant for very long periods of time. Our naturalist will have been in some degree influenced by the enormous range of man, which is a great anomaly in the class of mammals, if mankind be viewed as a single species. He will have been struck with the distribution of the several so-called races, which accords with that of other undoubtedly distinct species of mammals. Finally, he might urge that the mutual fertility of all the races has not as yet been fully proved, and even if proved would not be an absolute proof of their specific identity.

On the other side of the question, if our supposed naturalist were to enquire whether the forms of man keep distinct like ordinary species, when mingled together in large numbers in the same country, he would immediately discover that this was by no means the case. In Brazil he would behold an immense mongrel population of Negroes and Portuguese; in Chiloe, and other parts of South America, he would behold the whole population consisting of Indians and Spaniards blended in various degrees. In many parts of the same continent he would meet with the most complex crosses between Negroes, Indians, and Europeans; and judging from the vegetable kingdom, such triple crosses afford the severest test of the mutual fertility of the parent-forms. In one island of the Pacific he would find a small population of mingled Polynesian and English blood; and in the Fiji Archipelago a population of Polynesian and

Negritos crossed in all degrees. Many analogous cases could be be added; for instance, in Africa. Hence the races of man are not sufficiently distinct to inhabit the same country without fusion; and the absence of fusion affords the usual and best test of specific distinctness.

Our naturalist would likewise be much disturbed as soon as he perceived that the distinctive characters of all the races were highly variable. This fact strikes every one on first beholding the negro slaves in Brazil, who have been imported from all parts of Africa. The same remark holds good with the Polynesians, and with many other races. It may be doubted whether any character can be named which is distinctive of a race and is constant. Savages, even within the limits of the same tribe, are not nearly so uniform in character, as has been often asserted. Hottentot women offer certain peculiarities, more strongly marked than those occurring in any other race, but those are known not to be of constant occurrence. In the several American tribes, colour and hairiness differ considerably; as does colour to a certain degree, and the shape of the features greatly, in the Negroes of Africa. The shape of the skull varies much in some races; and so it is with every other character. Now all naturalists have learnt by dearly-bought experience, how rash it is to attempt to define species by the aid of inconstant characters.

But the most weighty of all the arguments against treating the races of man as distinct species, is that they graduate into each other, independently in many cases, as far as we can judge, of their having intercrossed. Man has been studied more carefully than any other animal, and yet there is the greatest possible diversity amongst capable judges whether he should be classed as a single species or race, or as two (Virey), as three (Jacquinot), as four (Kant), five (Blumenbach), six (Buffon), seven (Hunter), eight (Agassiz), eleven (Pickering), fifteen (Bory St. Vincent), sixteen (Desmoulins), twenty-two (Morton), sixty (Crawfurd), or as sixty-three, according to Burke.[5] This diversity of judgment does not prove that the races ought not to be ranked as species, but it shows

that they graduate into each other, and that it is hardly possible to discover clear distinctive characters between them.

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Endnotes

- Note 3: Term for people of mixed White and Black descent.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The offspring of a horse and a donkey; mules are unable to reproduce.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: All the figures listed in this paragraph were important philosophers and natural historians of the late 18th and early 19th centuries.Return to reference 5

From *Chapter 19. Secondary Sexual Characters of Man*

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There can be little doubt that the greater size and strength of man, in comparison with woman, together with his broader shoulders, more developed muscles, rugged outline of body, his greater courage and pugnacity, are all due in chief part to inheritance from his half-human male ancestors. These characters would, however, have been preserved or even augmented during the long ages of man's savagery, by the success of the strongest and boldest men, both in the general struggle for life and in their contests for wives; a success which would have ensured their leaving a more numerous progeny than their less favoured brethren. It is not probable that the greater strength of man was primarily acquired through the inherited effects of his having worked harder than woman for his own subsistence and that of his family; for the women in all barbarous nations are compelled to work at least as hard as the men. With civilised people the arbitrament of battle for the possession of the women has long ceased; on the other hand, the men, as a general rule, have to work harder than the women for their joint subsistence, and thus their greater strength will have been kept up.

Difference in the Mental Powers of the two Sexes.—With respect to differences of this nature between man and woman, it is probable that sexual selection has played a highly important part. I am aware that some writers doubt whether there is any such inherent difference; but this is at least probable from the analogy of the lower animals which present other secondary sexual characters. No one disputes that the bull differs in disposition from the cow, the wild-boar from the sow, the stallion from the mare, and, as is well known to the keepers of menageries, the males of the larger apes from the females. Woman seems to differ from man in mental disposition, chiefly in her greater tenderness and less selfishness; and this holds good even with savages, as shown by a well-known passage in

Mungo Park's Travels,[6] and by statements made by many other travellers. Woman, owing to her maternal instincts, displays those qualities towards her infants in an eminent degree; therefore it is likely that she would often extend them towards her fellow-creatures. Man is the rival of other men; he delights in competition, and this leads to ambition which passes too easily into selfishness. These latter qualities seem to be his natural and unfortunate birthright. It is generally admitted that with woman the powers of intuition, of rapid perception, and perhaps of imitation, are more strongly marked than in man; but some, at least, of these faculties are characteristic of the lower races, and therefore of a past and lower state of civilisation.

The chief distinction in the intellectual powers of the two sexes is shown by man's attaining to a higher eminence, in whatever he takes up, than can woman—whether requiring deep thought, reason, or imagination, or merely the use of the senses and hands. If two lists were made of the most eminent men and women in poetry, painting, sculpture, music (inclusive both of composition and performance), history, science, and philosophy, with half-a-dozen names under each subject, the two lists would not bear comparison. We may also infer, from the law of the deviation from averages, so well illustrated by Mr. Galton,[7] in his work on 'Hereditary Genius,' that if men are capable of a decided pre-eminence over women in many subjects, the average of mental power in man must be above that of woman.

Amongst the half-human progenitors of man, and amongst savages, there have been struggles between the males during many generations for the possession of the females. But mere bodily strength and size would do little for victory, unless associated with courage, perseverance, and determined energy. With social animals, the young males have to pass through many a contest before they win a female, and the older males have to retain their females by renewed battles. They have, also, in the case of mankind, to defend their females, as well as their young, from enemies of all kinds, and to hunt for their joint subsistence. But to avoid enemies or to attack

them with success, to capture wild animals, and to fashion weapons, requires the aid of the higher mental faculties, namely, observation, reason, invention, or imagination. These various faculties will thus have been continually put to the test and selected during manhood; they will, moreover, have been strengthened by use during this same period of life. Consequently, in accordance with the principle often alluded to, we might expect that they would at least tend to be transmitted chiefly to the male offspring at the corresponding period of manhood.

Now, when two men are put into competition, or a man with a woman, both possessed of every mental quality in equal perfection, save that one has higher energy, perseverance, and courage, the latter will generally become more eminent in every pursuit, and will gain the ascendancy. He may be said to possess genius—for genius has been declared by a great authority to be patience; and patience, in this sense, means unflinching, undaunted perseverance. But this view of genius is perhaps deficient; for without the higher powers of the imagination and reason, no eminent success can be gained in many subjects. Those latter faculties, as well as the former, will have been developed in man, partly through sexual selection,—that is, through the contest of rival males, and partly through natural selection,—that is, from success in the general struggle for life; and as in both cases the struggle will have been during maturity, the characters gained will have been transmitted more fully to the male than to the female offspring. It accords in a striking manner with this view of the modification and re-inforcement of many of our mental faculties by sexual selection, that, firstly, they notoriously undergo a considerable change at puberty, and, secondly, that eunuchs remain throughout life inferior in these same qualities. Thus man has ultimately become superior to woman. It is, indeed, fortunate that the law of the equal transmission of characters to both sexes prevails with mammals; otherwise it is probable that man would have become as superior in mental endowment to woman, as the peacock is in ornamental plumage to the peahen.

It must be borne in mind that the tendency in characters acquired by either sex late in life, to be transmitted to the same sex at the same age, and of early acquired characters to be transmitted to both sexes, are rules which, though general, do not always hold. If they always held good, we might conclude (but I here exceed my proper bounds) that the inherited effects of the early education of boys and girls would be transmitted equally to both sexes; so that the present inequality in mental power between the sexes would not be effaced by a similar course of early training; nor can it have been caused by their dissimilar early training. In order that woman should reach the same standard as man, she ought, when nearly adult, to be trained to energy and perseverance, and to have her reason and imagination exercised to the highest point; and then she would probably transmit these qualities chiefly to her adult daughters. All women, however, could not be thus raised, unless during many generations those who excelled in the above robust virtues were married, and produced offspring in larger numbers than other women. As before remarked of bodily strength, although men do not now fight for their wives, and this form of selection has passed away, yet during manhood, they generally undergo a severe struggle in order to maintain themselves and their families; and this will tend to keep up or even increase their mental powers, and, as a consequence, the present inequality between the sexes.

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Endnotes

- Note 6: Mungo Park's *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* (1799) was a popular account of the author's trip to Africa in search of the Niger River.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Sir Francis Galton was an important natural historian whose later work attempted to use Darwin's theories to argue for what came to be known as "social Darwinism," or the notion

that some races are inherently more intelligent, industrious, and so on than others.Return to reference 7

From *Chapter 21. General Summary and Conclusion*

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Man scans with scrupulous care the character and pedigree of his horses, cattle, and dogs before he matches them; but when he comes to his own marriage he rarely, or never, takes any such care. He is impelled by nearly the same motives as the lower animals, when they are left to their own free choice, though he is in so far superior to them that he highly values mental charms and virtues. On the other hand he is strongly attracted by more wealth or rank. Yet he might by selection do something not only for the bodily constitution and frame of his offspring, but for their intellectual and moral qualities. Both sexes ought to refrain from marriage if they are in any marked degree inferior in body or mind; but such hopes are Utopian and will never be even partially realised until the laws of inheritance are thoroughly known. Everyone does good service, who aids towards this end. When the principles of breeding and inheritance are better understood, we shall not hear ignorant members of our legislature rejecting with scorn a plan for ascertaining whether or not consanguineous marriages are injurious to man.

The advancement of the welfare of mankind is a most intricate problem: all ought to refrain from marriage who cannot avoid abject poverty for their children; for poverty is not only a great evil, but tends to its own increase by leading to recklessness in marriage. On the other hand, as Mr. Galton has remarked, if the prudent avoid marriage, whilst the reckless marry, the inferior members tend to supplant the better members of society. Man, like every other animal, has no doubt advanced to his present high condition through a struggle for existence consequent on his rapid multiplication; and if he is to advance still higher, it is to be feared that he must remain subject to a severe struggle. Otherwise he would sink into indolence, and the more gifted men would not be more successful in the battle of life than the less gifted. Hence our natural rate of increase,

though leading to many and obvious evils, must not be greatly diminished by any means. There should be open competition for all men; and the most able should not be prevented by laws or customs from succeeding best and rearing the largest number of offspring. Important as the struggle for existence has been and even still is, yet as far as the highest part of man's nature is concerned there are other agencies more important. For the moral quantities are advanced, either directly or indirectly, much more through the effects of habit, the reasoning powers, instruction, religion, &c., than through natural selection; though to this latter agency may be safely attributed the social instincts, which afforded the basis for the development of the moral sense.

The main conclusion arrived at in this work, namely that man is descended from some lowly organised form, will, I regret to think, be highly distasteful to many. But there can hardly be a doubt that we are descended from barbarians. The astonishment which I felt on first seeing a party of Fuegians[8] on a wild and broken shore will never be forgotten by me, for the reflection at once rushed into my mind—such were our ancestors. These men were absolutely naked and bedaubed with paint, their long hair was tangled, their mouths frothed with excitement, and their expression was wild, startled, and distrustful. They possessed hardly any arts, and like wild animals lived on what they could catch; they had no government, and were merciless to every one not of their own small tribe. He who has seen a savage in his native land will not feel much shame, if forced to acknowledge that the blood of some more humble creature flows in his veins. For my own part I would as soon be descended from that heroic little monkey, who braved his dreaded enemy in order to save the life of his keeper, or from that old baboon, who descending from the mountains, carried away in triumph his young comrade from a crowd of astonished dogs—as from a savage who delights to torture his enemies, offers up bloody sacrifices, practises infanticide without remorse, treats his wives like slaves, knows no decency, and is haunted by the grossest superstitions.

Man may be excused for feeling some pride at having risen, though not through his own exertions, to the very summit of the organic scale; and the fact of his having thus risen, instead of having been aboriginally placed there, may give him hope for a still higher destiny in the distant future. But we are not here concerned with hopes or fears, only with the truth as far as our reason permits us to discover it; and I have given the evidence to the best of my ability. We must, however, acknowledge, as it seems to me, that man with all his noble qualities, with sympathy which feels for the most debased, with benevolence which extends not only to other men but to the humblest living creature, with his god-like intellect which has penetrated into the movements and constitution of the solar system —with all these exalted powers—Man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin.

1871

Endnotes

- Note 8: The Indigenous inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego. Many died as a result of diseases such as smallpox and measles that were carried by westerners, and to which the Fuegians had no immunity.Return to reference 8

LEONARD HUXLEY

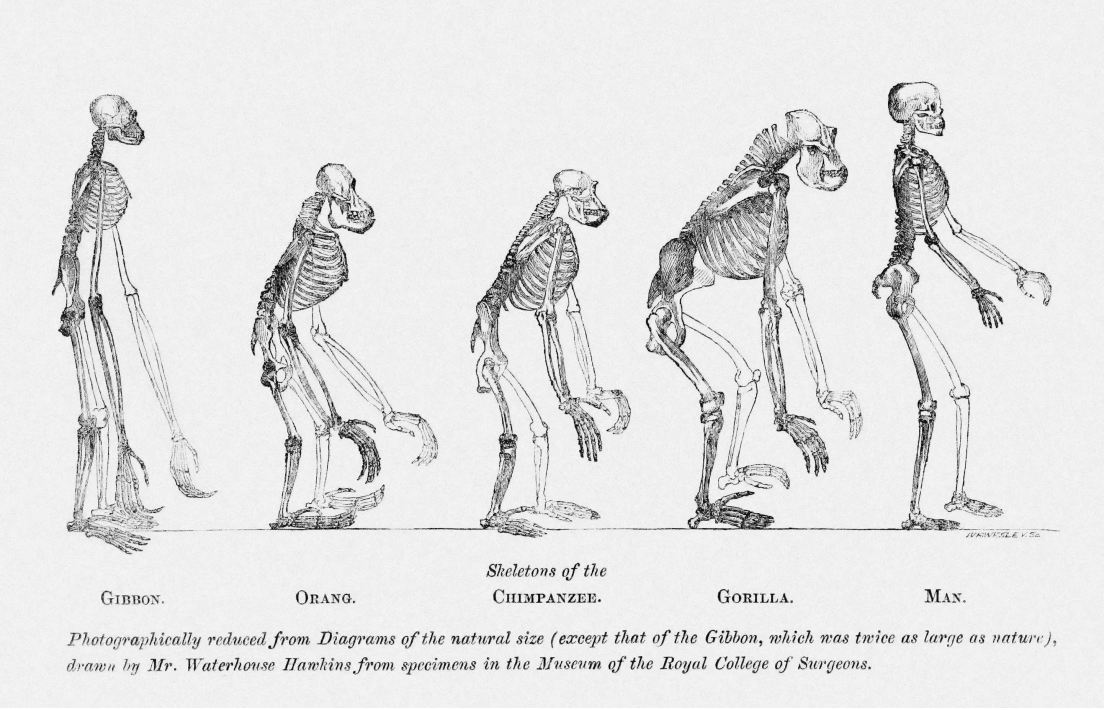
At meetings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, the reading of a paper is followed by a discussion. In 1860, at Oxford, this discussion developed into a debate between Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–1895), a defender of Charles Darwin's theories, and Bishop Samuel Wilberforce (1805–1873). Although not a scientist himself, Wilberforce spoke on behalf of those scientists who disagreed with the claims made in *The Origin of Species* (1859), and he reportedly came to the meeting ready to "smash Darwin." If this was his intention, he cannot be said to have succeeded.

Because no complete transcript of this celebrated debate was made at the time, Huxley's son Leonard (1860–1933) reconstructed the scene by combining quotations from reports made by magazine writers and other witnesses. The account given here is from chapter 14 of Leonard Huxley's biography of his father.

From The Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley

[THE HUXLEY–WILBERFORCE DEBATE AT OXFORD]

The famous Oxford Meeting of 1860 was of no small importance in Huxley's career. It was not merely that he helped to save a great cause from being stifled under misrepresentation and ridicule—that he helped to extort for it a fair hearing; it was now that he first made himself known in popular estimation as a dangerous adversary in debate—a personal force in the world of science which could not be neglected. From this moment he entered the front fighting line in the most exposed quarter of the field. * * *



Man's Place in Nature. This drawing appeared as the frontispiece to T. H. Huxley's book *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature* (1863).

It was the merest chance, as I have already said, that Huxley attended the meeting of the section that morning. Dr. Draper[1] of New York was to read a paper on the *Intellectual Development of Europe considered with reference to the views of Mr. Darwin.* "I can still hear," writes one who was present, "the American accents of Dr. Draper's opening address when he asked 'Air we a fortuitous concourse of atoms?' " However, it was not to hear him, but the eloquence of the Bishop, that the members of the Association crowded in such numbers into the Lecture Room of the Museum, that this, the appointed meeting place of the section, had to be abandoned for the long west room, since cut in two by a partition for the purposes of the library. It was not term time, nor were the general public admitted; nevertheless the room was crowded to suffocation long before the protagonists appeared on the scene, 700 persons or more managing to find places. The very windows by which the room was lighted down the length of its west side were packed with ladies, whose white handkerchiefs, waving and fluttering in the air at the end of the Bishop's speech, were an unforgettable factor in the acclamation of the crowd.

On the east side between the two doors was the platform. Professor Henslow, the President of the section, took his seat in the center; upon his right was the Bishop, and beyond him again Dr. Draper; on his extreme left was Mr. Dingle, a clergyman from Lanchester, near Durham, with Sir J. Hooker and Sir J. Lubbock in front of him, and nearer the center, Professor Beale of King's College, London, and Huxley.[2]

The clergy, who shouted lustily for the Bishop, were massed in the middle of the room; behind them in the northwest corner a knot of undergraduates (one of these was T. H. Green,[3] who listened but took no part in the cheering) had gathered together beside Professor Brodie,[4] ready to lift their voices, poor minority though they were, for the opposite party. Close to them stood one of the few men among the audience already in Holy orders, who joined in—and indeed led—the cheers for the Darwinians.

So "Dr. Draper droned out his paper, turning first to the right hand and then to the left, of course bringing in a reference to the *Origin of Species* which set the ball rolling."

An hour or more that paper lasted, and then discussion began. The President "wisely announced *in limine*[5] that none who had not valid arguments to bring forward on one side or the other would be allowed to address the meeting; a caution that proved necessary, for no fewer than four combatants had their utterances burked[6] by him, because of their indulgence in vague declamation."

> First spoke (writes Professor Farrar[7]) a layman from Brompton, who gave his name as being one of the Committee of the (newly formed) Economic section of the Association. He, in a stentorian voice, let off his theological venom. Then jumped up Richard Greswell[8] with a thin voice, saying much the same, but speaking as a scholar; but we did not merely want any theological discussion, so we shouted them down. Then a Mr. Dingle got up and tried to show that Darwin would have done much better if he had taken him into consultation. He used the blackboard and began a mathematical demonstration on the question—"Let this point A be man, and let that point B be the mawnkey." He got no further; he was shouted down with cries of "mawnkey." None of these had spoken more than three minutes. It was when these were shouted down that Henslow said he must demand that the discussion should rest on *scientific* grounds only.
>
> Then there were calls for the Bishop, but he rose and said he understood his friend Professor Beale had something to say first. Beale, who was an excellent histologist,[9] spoke to the effect that the new theory ought to meet with fair discussion, but added, with great modesty, that he himself had not sufficient knowledge to discuss the subject adequately. Then the Bishop spoke the speech that you know, and the question about his mother being an ape, or his grandmother.

From the scientific point of view, the speech was of small value. It was evident from his mode of handling the subject that he had been "crammed up to the throat," and knew nothing at first hand; he used no argument beyond those to be found in his *Quarterly* article, which appeared a few days later, and is now admitted to have been inspired by Owen.[1] "He ridiculed Darwin badly and Huxley savagely; but," confesses one of his strongest opponents, "all in such dulcet tones, so persuasive a manner, and in such well turned periods, that I who had been inclined to blame the President for allowing a discussion that could serve no scientific purpose, now forgave him from the bottom of my heart."

The Bishop spoke thus "for full half an hour with inimitable spirit, emptiness and unfairness." "In a light, scoffing tone, florid and fluent, he assured us there was nothing in the idea of evolution; rock pigeons were what rock pigeons had always been. Then, turning to his antagonist with a smiling insolence, he begged to know, was it through his grandfather or his grandmother that he claimed his descent from a monkey?"

This was the fatal mistake of his speech. Huxley instantly grasped the tactical advantage which the descent to personalities gave him. He turned to Sir Benjamin Brodie, who was sitting beside him, and emphatically striking his hand upon his knee, exclaimed, "The Lord hath delivered him into mine hands."[2] The bearing of the exclamation did not dawn upon Sir Benjamin until after Huxley had completed his "forcible and eloquent" answer to the scientific part of the Bishop's argument, and proceeded to make his famous retort.

> On this (continues the writer in *Macmillan's Magazine*) Mr. Huxley slowly and deliberately arose. A slight tall figure, stern and pale, very quiet and very grave, he stood before us and spoke those tremendous words—words which no one seems sure of now, nor, I think, could remember just after they were spoken, for their meaning took away our breath, though it left us in no doubt as to what it was. He was not ashamed to have a monkey for his ancestor; but he would be ashamed to be

> connected with a man who used great gifts to obscure the truth. No one doubted his meaning, and the effect was tremendous. One lady fainted and had to be carried out; I, for one, jumped out of my seat.

The fullest and probably most accurate account of these concluding words is the following, from a letter of the late John Richard Green, then an undergraduate, to his friend, afterwards Professor Boyd Dawkins:[3]

> I asserted—and I repeat—that a man has no reason to be ashamed of having an ape for his grandfather. If there were an ancestor whom I should feel shame in recalling it would rather be a man—a man of restless and versatile intellect—who, not content with an equivocal success in his own sphere of activity, plunges into scientific questions with which he has no real acquaintance, only to obscure them by an aimless rhetoric, and distract the attention of his hearers from the real point at issue by eloquent digressions and skilled appeals to religious prejudice.

The result of this encounter, though a check to the other side, cannot, of course, be represented as an immediate and complete triumph for evolutionary doctrine. This was precluded by the character and temper of the audience, most of whom were less capable of being convinced by the arguments than shocked by the boldness of the retort, although, being gentlefolk, as Professor Farrar remarks, they were disposed to admit on reflection that the Bishop had erred on the score of taste and good manners. Nevertheless, it was a noticeable feature of the occasion, Sir M. Foster[4] tells me, that when Huxley rose he was received coldly, just a cheer of encouragement from his friends, the audience as a whole not joining in it. But as he made his points the applause grew and widened, until, when he sat down, the cheering was not very much less than that given to the Bishop. To that extent he carried an unwilling audience with him by the force of his speech. The debate on the ape

question, however, was continued elsewhere during the next two years, and the evidence was completed by the unanswerable demonstrations of Sir W. H. Flower[5] at the Cambridge meeting of the Association in 1862.



THE DESCENT OF MAN.

Figurative Party. "So long as *I* am a Man, Sorr, what does it matther to me whether me *Great-grandfather* was an Anthropoid Ape or not, Sorr!"

Literal Party. "Haw! wather disagweeable for your *Gwate Gwand-mother*, wasn't it?"

***The Descent of Man*.** This cartoon by George du Maurier (1834–1896) appeared in the popular satirical magazine *Punch* in 1873. The phonetic rendering of the speech of the "Figurative Party" (sitting on the table) marks him as Irish; that of the "Literal Party" (and his clothing), a member of the upper classes.

The importance of the Oxford meeting lay in the open resistance that was made to authority, at a moment when even a drawn battle was hardly less effectual than acknowledged victory. Instead of being crushed under ridicule, the new theories secured a hearing, all the wider, indeed, for the startling nature of their defense.

1901

Endnotes

- Note 1: John W. Draper (1811–1882), British-born chemist, photographer, and historian who was a professor at the University of the City of New York.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Except for the clergyman Dingle, all those named are scientists of some repute. John Stevens Henslow (1796–1861), professor of botany at Cambridge. Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker (1817–1911), botanist (and Henslow's son-in-law). Sir John Lubbock (1834–1913), banker, statesman, naturalist, and Darwin's neighbor. Lionel Smith Beale (1828–1905), professor of medicine.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Later a prominent British philosopher (1836–1882).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Sir Benjamin Brodie (1783–1862), physiologist and surgeon.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: As a starting point (Latin).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Suppressed, hushed.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Adam Storey Farrar (1826–1905), canon of Durham and professor of divinity at Durham University.Return to reference 7

- Note 8: A clergyman who was a tutor of Worcester College, Oxford.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A biologist specializing in the study of the minute structure of the tissues of plants and animals.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Sir Richard Owen (1804–1892), a leading zoologist and paleontologist who was opposed to Darwin's theories. Wilberforce's review of Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) appeared in the July 1860 issue of the *Quarterly Review.*Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare with 2 Samuel 5:19 (where the Lord promises to deliver the Philistines into David's hands).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: William Boyd Dawkins (1838–1929), British geologist and archaeologist. Green (1837–1883), British historian.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Sir Michael Foster (1836–1907), British physiologist and educator.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Sir William Henry Flower (1831–1899), British zoologist.Return to reference 5

The Promise and Price of Industrialization

In 1835, the French statesman and author Alexis de Tocqueville wrote of Manchester: "From this foul drain, the greatest stream of human industry flows out to fertilize the whole world. From this filthy sewer pure gold flows. Here humanity attains its most complete development and its most brutish, here civilization works its miracles and civilized man is turned almost into a savage." De Tocqueville's graphic sense of the wealth and the wretchedness created by the Industrial Revolution epitomizes contemporary responses. Victorians debated whether the machine age was a blessing or a curse, whether the economic system was making humanity happier or more miserable. Did the Industrial Revolution represent progress, and how, in fact, was progress to be defined?

The Industrial Revolution was the result of a complex set of causes, none of which, by itself, could have given rise to the phenomenon: crucial technological innovations would have meant little without notable population growth, an increase in agricultural efficiency that released much of the workforce from field labor, and key economic changes, such as greater mobility of capital and the wealth and raw materials brought in by imperial expansion. Transformations in the production of textiles led to the first and most dramatic break with age-old practices. First powered by hand, or sometimes by water, machinery to speed up spinning and weaving processes was developed in England in the eighteenth century; by the 1780s manufacturers were installing steam engines, newly improved by James Watt (1736–1819), in large buildings called mills or factories. Mill towns, producing cotton or woollen cloth for the world's markets, grew quickly in northern England; the population of the city of Manchester, for example, increased tenfold in the years between 1760 and 1830. The development of the railways in the

1830s initiated a new phase in the industrial age, marked by an enormous expansion in the production of iron and coal. By the beginning of the Victorian period, the Industrial Revolution had already created profound economic and social changes. Hundreds of thousands of workers had migrated to the industrial towns, where they lived in horribly crowded, unsanitary housing, and labored long hours—fourteen a day or more—at very low wages. Employers often preferred to hire women and children, who worked for even lower wages than men.

Moved by the terrible suffering of the workers, which was intensified by a severe depression in the early 1840s, writers and legislators drew increasingly urgent attention to the condition of the working class. Parliamentary committees and commissions in the 1830s and 1840s introduced testimony about working conditions in mines and factories that led to the beginning of government regulation and inspection, particularly of the working conditions of women and children.

The terrible living and working conditions of industrial laborers led a number of writers to see the Industrial Revolution as an appalling retrogression. Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin both lamented the changed conditions of labor, the loss of craftsmanship and individual creativity, and the disappearance of what Karl Marx called the "feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations" between employer and employee that they believed had existed in earlier economies. They criticized industrial manufacture not only for the misery of the conditions it created but also for its regimentation of minds and hearts as well as bodies and resources. In works such as *Past and Present* (1843) and *Unto This Last* (1860), Carlyle and Ruskin, respectively, advocated a nostalgic and conservative ideal, in which employers and workers returned to a medieval relationship to craft and to authority and responsibility. Other writers drew more radical conclusions. William Morris's perception of the workers' plight led him to socialism, though a socialism with a medieval ideal; and Marx, in collaboration with Friedrich Engels, based *The Communist Manifesto* of 1848 in part on Engels's observation of Manchester in

The Condition of the Working Class in England (1845). The outrage expressed by these authors is very different from the satisfaction evident in the writings of the historian Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859), who congratulated England on the progress that industrialism had enabled.

This cluster is divided into two sections: the first addresses the political and social implications of industrialization. Thomas Hood and Ernest Jones are only two of the many activists, organizers, poets, and essayists who sought to call attention to the way the new factory system concentrated power and capital in the hands of a few. The Children's Employment Commission (1842) addresses the consequences for children of a factory system that could rely on their unskilled, inexpensive, and unregulated labor. Ada Nield Chew attends to the plight of "factory girls." Adelaide Procter and Elizabeth Gaskell describe the experiences of intense poverty that accompanied the mass movement of populations into the cities.

The second section of this cluster focuses on the environmental consequences of rapid industrialization. Nineteenth-century industrialization is sometimes referred to as the initiating event of the "Anthropocene," or the period during which human activity began to reshape the climate and the environment. Throughout most of the nineteenth century, Great Britain was the most "advanced"—as in the most industrialized—nation on earth. Its coal production was massive, and it resulted in a fundamentally altered landscape and atmosphere. The first selection in this section, from de Tocqueville, gives some sense of what a new factory town looked like to a traveler unaccustomed to such sights. Both de Tocqueville's horror and his amazement are apparent in the passage. The second selection, from Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*, recounts the fog for which the city was famous. John Ruskin's "Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century" is one of the first descriptions of environmental degradation. And finally, the passage from Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, provides a vivid account of the impact of industrialization on the British countryside, a place that might seem immune to its pressures.

Poverty and Politics

THOMAS HOOD

Despite his middle-class background as the son of a bookseller, and his comfortable position as an author of light verse, Thomas Hood (1799–1845) was known for his compassionate representations of the plight of the working poor. “The Song of the Shirt” was first published anonymously in the Christmas issue of the humor magazine *Punch* in 1843; it was quickly reprinted in newspapers throughout Europe.

The Song of the Shirt

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A Woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
She sang the "Song of the Shirt!"

"Work! work! work!
While the cock is crowing aloof!
And work—work—work,
Till the stars shine through the roof!
It's O! to be a slave
Along with the barbarous Turk,
Where woman has never a soul to save,
If this is Christian work!

"Work—work—work
Till the brain begins to swim;
Work—work—work
Till the eyes are heavy and dim!
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Till over the buttons I fall asleep,
And sew them on in a dream!

"O! Men, with Sisters dear!
O! Men! with Mothers and Wives!
It is not linen you're wearing out,
But human creatures' lives!

Stitch—stitch—stitch,
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
Sewing at once, with a double thread,
A Shroud as well as a Shirt.

"But why do I talk of Death?
That Phantom of grisly bone,
I hardly fear his terrible shape,
It seems so like my own—
It seems so like my own,
Because of the fasts I keep,
Oh! God! that bread should be so dear,
And flesh and blood so cheap!

"Work—work—work!
My labour never flags;
And what are its wages? A bed of straw,
A crust of bread—and rags.
That shatter'd roof—and this naked floor—
A table—a broken chair—
And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank
For sometimes falling there!

"Work—work—work!
From weary chime to chime,
Work—work—work—
As prisoners work for crime!
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Till the heart is sick, and the brain benumb'd,
As well as the weary hand.

"Work—work—work,
In the dull December light,
And work—work—work,
When the weather is warm and bright—

While underneath the eaves
The brooding swallows cling
As if to show me their sunny backs
And twit me with the spring.

"Oh! but to breathe the breath
Of the cowslip and primrose sweet—
With the sky above my head,
And the grass beneath my feet,
For only one short hour
To feel as I used to feel.
Before I knew the woes of want
And the walk that costs a meal!

"Oh but for one short hour!
A respite however brief!
No blessed leisure for Love or Hope,
But only time for Grief!
A little weeping would ease my heart,
But in their briny bed
My tears must stop, for every drop
Hinders needle and thread!"

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A Woman sate in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch,
Would that its tone could reach the Rich!
She sang this "Song of the Shirt!"

1843

ERNEST JONES

Ernest Jones (1819–1869) was born into the landed gentry yet became one of the leaders of the working-class Chartist movement for political reform. In 1848 he was convicted of sedition and sentenced to two years in prison. Karl Marx described Jones as "the most talented, consistent and energetic representative of Chartism," the political movement that sought voting rights for most adult men.

The Song of the Low

(*To a Popular Melody.*)

We're low—we're low—we're very very low,
  As low as low can be;
The rich are high—for we make them so—
  And a miserable lot are we!
  And a miserable lot are we! are we!
  A miserable lot are we!

We plough and sow—we're so very very low,
  That we delve in the dirty clay,
Till we bless the plain with the golden grain,
  And the vale with the fragrant hay.
Our place we know—we're so very low,
  'Tis down at the landlords' feet:
We're not too low—the bread to grow,
  But too low the bread to eat.
    We're low, we're low, etc.

Down, down we go—we're so very very low,
  To the hell of the deep sunk mines.
But we gather the proudest gems that glow,
  When the crown of a despot shines;
And whenever he lacks—upon our backs
  Fresh loads he deigns to lay,
We're far too low to vote the tax.[1]
  But not too low to pay.
    We're low, we're low, etc.

We're low, we're low—mere rabble, we know,
  But at our plastic power,

The mould at the lordling's feet will grow
  Into palace and church and tower—
Then prostrate fall—in the rich man's hall,
  And cringe at the rich man's door,
We're not too low to build the wall,
  But too low to tread the floor.
    We're low, we're low, etc.

We're low, we're low—we're very very low,
  Yet from our fingers glide
The silken flow—and the robes that glow,
  Round the limbs of the sons of pride.
And what we get—and what we give,
  We know—and we know our share.
We're not too low the cloth to weave—
  But too low the cloth to wear.
    We're low, we're low, etc.

We're low, we're low—we're very very low,
  And yet when the trumpets ring,
The thrust of a poor man's arm will go
  Through the heart of the proudest king!
We're low, we're low—our place we know,
  We're only the rank and file,
We're not too low—to kill the foe,
  But too low to touch the spoil.
    We're low, we're low, etc.

1852

Endnotes

- Note 1: One of Chartism's principal demands was the expansion of the franchise to most men over the age of eighteen.Return to reference 1

THE CHILDREN'S EMPLOYMENT COMMISSION

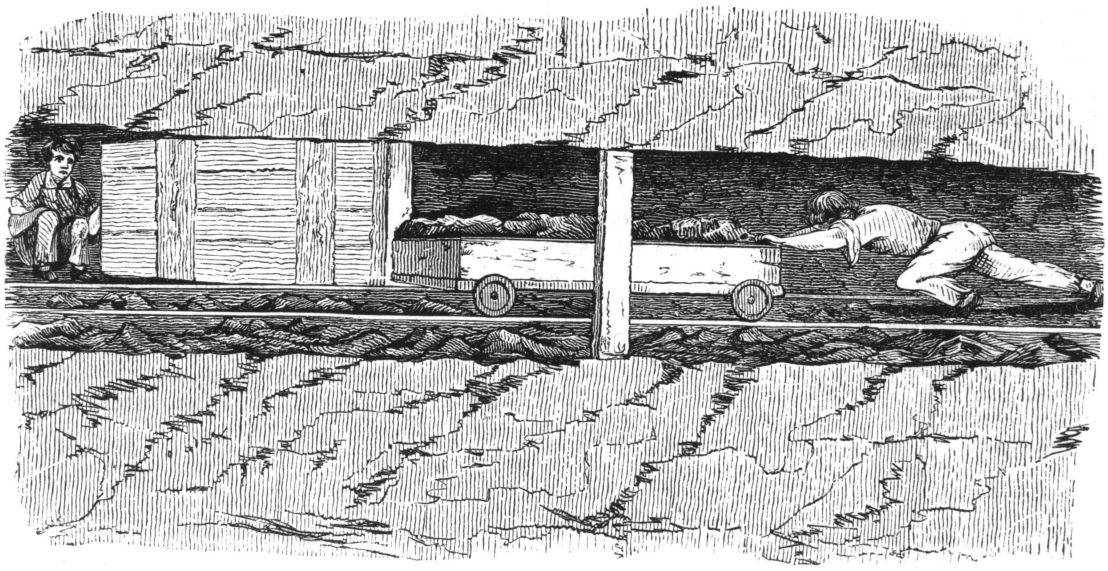
Although official attempts to regulate child labor began in 1788, when Parliament passed the Chimney Sweepers Act, the more general problem was not addressed until well into the nineteenth century. Government investigations (Select Committees and Royal Commissions) took place in 1816 and the early 1830s and led to numerous legislative measures, but most of their provisions were meaningless because they were not enforced. The Factories Regulation Act of 1833 marks the first significant point of successful intervention: the act both established a minimum age for all workers in textile mills (nine years old) and set limits to the hours per week that children in different age groups and women could work. More broadly, a Royal Commission was convened in 1842–43 to examine "the mines and collieries of the United Kingdom and all trades and manufactures whatever in which children work together in numbers." The reports of the commission, from which the following excerpt and two illustrations are taken, caused dismay and disbelief when they were made generally available; Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "The Cry of the Children" (1843) was one of the many public responses to the scandal. In the legislation that followed, girls and women were banned from mine work; although the authors of the bill had also hoped to prohibit the employment of boys under thirteen years of age, parliamentary debate reduced the age to ten.

The first illustration shows a hurrier, a worker who dragged a loaded corve, or wagon; these weighed between two hundred and five hundred pounds and were attached to the hurrier by a chain. The passageways in the mine (or pit) were sometimes only sixteen inches high. The second illustration presents a thruster, who pushed a corve. The child on the left is a trapper: the youngest workers of all, these five- or six-year-olds sat alone in darkness to open and

close the doors that controlled the mine's ventilation system. The extract comes from the evidence collected by Commissioner S. S. Scriven, who visited the mines in the West Riding of Yorkshire in the company of a local doctor and lawyer and interviewed the child laborers there.



***Hurrier*.** An illustration of a "hurrier" in a Yorkshire coal mine, from the 1842–43 Children's Employment Commission report.



***Trapper and Thruster*.** An illustration of a "trapper" and a "thruster" in a Lancashire coalmine, from the 1842–43 Children's Employment Commission report.

From First Report of the Commissioners, Mines

[CHILD MINE-WORKER IN YORKSHIRE]

Margaret Gomley, Living at Lindley Moor, aged 9. May 7

They call me Peggy for my nick-name down here, but my right name is Margaret; I am about nine years, or going nine; I have been at work in the pit thrusting corves above a year; come in the morning sometimes at seven o'clock, sometimes half-past seven, and I go sometimes home at six o'clock, sometimes at seven when I do over-work. I get my breakfast of porridge before I come, and bring a piece of muffin, which I eat on coming to pit; I get my dinner at 12 o'clock, which is a dry muffin, and sometimes butter on, but have no time allowed to stop to eat it, I eat it while I am thrusting the load; I get no tea, but get some supper when I get home, and then go to bed when I have washed me; and am very tired. I worked in pit last winter; I don't know at what hour I went down, as we have no clock, but it was day-light; it was six o'clock when we came up, but not always. They flog us down in the pit, sometimes with their hand upon my bottom, which hurts me very much; Thomas Copeland flogs me more than once in a day, which makes me cry. There are two other girls working with me, and there was four, but one left because she had the bellyache; I am poorly myself sometimes with bellyache, and sometimes headache. I had rather lake than go into the pit; I get 5*d.* a-day, but I had rather set cards[1] for 5*d.* a-day than go into the pit. The men often swear at me; many times they say Damn thee, and other times God damn thee (and such like), Peggy.

[Commissioner Scriven's commentary]

I descended this pit accompanied by one of the banksmen,[2] and, on alighting at the bottom, found the entrance to the mainway 2 feet 10 inches, and, which extended 500 yards. The bottom was deep in mire, and, as I had no corves low enough to convey me to the workings, waited some time under the dripping shaft the arrival of the hurriers, as I had reason to suspect there were some very young children labouring there. At length three girls arrived, with as many boys. It was impossible in the dark to distinguish the sexes. They were all naked excepting their shifts or shirts. Having placed one into the corve, I gave the signal, and ascended. On alighting on the pit's bank I discovered that it was a girl. I could not have believed that I should have found human nature so degraded. There is nothing that I can conceive amidst all the misery and wretchedness in the worst of factories equal to this. Mr. Holroyd, solicitor, and Mr. Brook, surgeon, practising in Stainland, were present, who confessed that, although living within a few miles, they could not have believed that such a system of unchristian cruelty could have existed.

1842–43

Endnotes

- Note 1: That is, work in a textile factory, where workers programmed looms to weave patterns with a series of punched cards. "Lake": play truant, or hookey (Yorkshire dialect). "5*d*.": five pence (*d*. abbreviates *denarius*, "penny" in Latin).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Colliery supervisors who worked above ground.Return to reference 2

ADA NIELD CHEW

Born on a farm in North Staffordshire, Ada Nield Chew (1870–1945) left school at the age of eleven to help her mother with taking care of house and family. In her early twenties she worked as a tailor in a factory in Crewe. She wrote a series of letters to the *Crewe Chronicle* about working conditions in the factory. When her identity was discovered, an uproar ensued, and she was fired. She became active in politics and continued to write for political causes.

A Living Wage for Factory Girls at Crewe, 5 May 1894

Sir,
—Will you grant me space in your sensible and widely read paper to complain of a great grievance of the class—that of tailoresses in some of the Crewe factories—to which I belong? I have hoped against hope that some influential man (or woman) would take up our cause and put us in the right way to remedy—for of course there is a remedy—for the evils we are suffering from. But although one cannot open a newspaper without seeing what all sorts and conditions of men are constantly agitating for and slowly but surely obtaining—as in the miners' eight hour bill[1]—only very vague mention is ever made of the under-paid, over-worked "Factory Girl." And I have come to the conclusion, sir, that as long as we are silent ourselves and apparently content with our lot, so long shall we be left in the enjoyment [?] of that lot.

The rates paid for the work done by us are so fearfully low as to be totally inadequate to—I had almost said keep body and soul together. Well, sir, it is a fact which I could prove, if necessary, that we are compelled, not by our employers, but by stern necessity, in order to keep ourselves in independence, which self-respecting girls even in our class of life like to do, to work so many hours—I would rather not say how many—that life loses its savour, and our toil, which in moderation and at a fair rate of remuneration would be pleasurable, becomes drudgery of the most wearisome kind.

To take what may be considered a good week's wage the work has to be so close and unremitting that we cannot be said to "live"—we merely exist. We eat, we sleep, we work, endlessly, ceaselessly work, from Monday morning till Saturday night, without remission. Cultivation of the mind? How is it possible? Reading? Those of us who are determined to live like human beings and require food for

mind as well as body are obliged to take time which is necessary for sleep to gratify this desire. As for recreation and enjoying the beauties of nature, the seasons come and go, and we have barely time to notice whether it is spring or summer.

Certainly we have Sundays: but Sunday is to many of us, after our week of slavery, a day of exhaustion. It has frequently been so in my case, and I am not delicate. This, you will understand, sir, is when work is plentiful. Of course we have slack times, of which the present is one (otherwise I should not have time to write to you). It may be said that we should utilise these slack times for recruiting our bodies and cultivating our minds. Many of us do so, as far as is possible in the anxious state we are necessarily in, knowing that we are not earning our "keep," for it is not possible, absolutely not possible, for the average ordinary "hand" to earn enough in busy seasons, even with the overtime I have mentioned, to make up for slack ones.

"A living wage!" Ours is a lingering, dying wage. Who reaps the benefit of our toil? I read sometimes of a different state of things in other factories, and if in others, why not those in Crewe? I have just read the report of the Royal Commission on Labour. Very good, but while Royal Commissions are enquiring and reporting and making suggestions, some of the workers are being hurried to their graves.

I am afraid I am trespassing a great deal on your space, sir, but my subject has such serious interest for me—I sometimes wax very warm as I sit stitching and thinking over our wrongs—that they, and the knowledge that your columns are always open to the needy, however humble, must be my excuse.

I am, sir, yours sincerely,
A CREWE FACTORY GIRL
Crewe, 1 May 1894

Editor's note: Our correspondent writes a most intelligent letter; and if she is a specimen of the factory girl, then Crewe factory proprietors should be proud of their "hands." We shall be glad to hear further from our correspondent as to the wages paid, the

numbers of hours worked, and the conditions of their employment. *Crewe Chronicle*, 5 May 1894

1894

Endnotes

- Note 1: Bill limiting miners' work shifts to eight hours.Return to reference 1

ADELAIDE A. PROCTER

Adelaide Procter (1825–1864) was a popular poet who wrote frequently on the issues of poverty and homelessness, particularly as they affect women and children. She also did extensive philanthropic work with "fallen" women—female sex workers and mothers of illegitimate children. She was one of Queen Victoria's favorite poets.

Homeless

It is cold dark midnight, yet listen
To that patter of tiny feet!
Is it one of your dogs, fair lady,
Who whines in the bleak cold street?—
Is it one of your silken spaniels
Shut out in the snow and the sleet?

My dogs sleep warm in their baskets,
Safe from the darkness and snow;
All the beasts in our Christian England,
Find pity wherever they go—
(Those are only the homeless children
Who are wandering to and fro.)

Look out in the gusty darkness—
I have seen it again and again,
That shadow, that flits so slowly
Up and down past the window pane:—
It is surely some criminal lurking
Out there in the frozen rain?

Nay, our Criminals all are sheltered,
They are pitied and taught and fed:
That is only a sister-woman
Who has got neither food nor bed—
And the Night cries ‘sin to be living,’
And the River cries ‘sin to be dead.’

Look out at that farthest corner
Where the wall stands blank and bare:—
Can that be a pack which a Pedlar

Has left and forgotten there?
His goods lying out unsheltered
Will be spoilt by the damp night air.

Nay;—goods in our thrifty England
Are not left to lie and grow rotten,
For each man knows the market value
Of silk or woollen or cotton . . .
But in counting the riches of England
I think our Poor are forgotten.

Our Beasts and our Thieves and our Chattels
Have weight for good or for ill;
But the Poor are only His image,
His presence, His word, His will—
And so Lazarus[1] lies at our doorstep
And Dives neglects him still.

1862

Endnotes

- Note 1: Luke 16:19–31 offers the parable of the rich man (or Dives) who neglects Lazarus, the beggar. Both men die at the same time: Lazarus goes to heaven and the rich man goes to hell.Return to reference 1

ELIZABETH GASKELL

In the preface to *Mary Barton*, Elizabeth Gaskell (1810–1865) wrote that she was inspired to write the novel by thinking "how deep might be the romance in the lives of some of those who elbowed me daily in the busy streets of the town in which I resided. I had always felt a deep sympathy with the careworn men, who looked as if doomed to struggle through their lives in strange alternations between work and want." This was Gaskell's first novel; she went on to write five more and at least thirty stories.

From Mary Barton

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One evening, when the clear light at six o'clock contrasted strangely with the Christmas cold, and when the bitter wind piped down every entry, and through every cranny, Barton sat brooding over his stinted fire, and listening for Mary's step, in unacknowledged trust that her presence would cheer him. The door was opened, and Wilson came breathless in.

"You've not got a bit o' money by you, Barton?" asked he.

"Not I; who has now, I'd like to know. Whatten you want it for?"

"I donnot[1] want it for mysel', tho' we've none to spare. But don ye know Ben Davenport as worked at Carsons'? He's down wi' the fever, and ne'er a stick o' fire nor a cowd[2] potato in the house."

"I han got no money, I tell ye," said Barton. Wilson looked disappointed. Barton tried not to be interested, but he could not help it in spite of his gruffness. He rose, and went to the cupboard (his wife's pride long ago). There lay the remains of his dinner, hastily put by ready for supper. Bread, and a slice of cold fat boiled bacon. He wrapped them in his handkerchief, put them in the crown of his hat, and said—"Come, let us be going."

"Going—art thou going to work this time o' day?"

"No stupid, to be sure not. Going to see the chap thou spoke on." So they put on their hats and set out. On the way Wilson said Davenport was a good fellow, though too much of the Methodee;[3] that his children were too young to work, but not too young to be cold and hungry; that they had sunk lower and lower, and pawned thing after thing, and that they now lived in a cellar in Berry Street, off Store Street. Barton growled inarticulate words of no benevolent import to a large class of mankind, and so they went along till they arrived in Berry Street. It was unpaved: and down the middle a

gutter forced its way, every now and then forming pools in the holes with which the street abounded. Never was the old Edinburgh cry of "Gardez l'eau,"[4] more necessary than in this street. As they passed, women from their doors tossed household slops of *every* description into the gutter; they ran into the next pool, which overflowed and stagnated. Heaps of ashes were the stepping-stones, on which the passer-by, who cared in the least for cleanliness, took care not to put his foot. Our friends were not dainty, but even they picked their way, till they got to some steps leading down to a small area, where a person standing would have his head about one foot below the level of the street, and might at the same time, without the least motion of his body, touch the window of the cellar and the damp muddy wall right opposite. You went down one step even from the foul area into the cellar in which a family of human beings lived. It was very dark inside. The window-panes many of them were broken and stuffed with rags, which was reason enough for the dusky light that pervaded the place even at mid-day. After the account I have given of the state of the street, no one can be surprised that on going into the cellar inhabited by Davenport, the smell was so fœtid as almost to knock the two men down. Quickly recovering themselves, as those inured to such things do, they began to penetrate the thick darkness of the place, and to see three or four little children rolling on the damp, nay wet, brick floor, through which the stagnant, filthy moisture of the street oozed up; the fire-place was empty and black; the wife sat on her husband's lair, and cried in the dank loneliness.

"See, missis, I'm back again.—Hold your noise, children, and don't mither[5] your mammy for bread; here's a chap as has got some for you."

In that dim light, which was darkness to strangers, they clustered round Barton, and tore from him the food he had brought with him. It was a large hunch of bread, but it had vanished in an instant.

"We mun do summut for 'em," said he to Wilson. "Yo stop here, and I'll be back in half-an-hour."

So he strode, and ran, and hurried home. He emptied into the ever-useful pocket handkerchief the little meal remaining in the mug. Mary would have her tea at Miss Simmonds'; her food for the day was safe. Then he went up-stairs for his better coat, and his one, gay, red-and-yellow silk pocket-handkerchief—his jewels, his plate, his valuables, these were. He went to the pawn-shop; he pawned them for five shillings; he stopped not, nor stayed, till he was once more in London Road, within five minutes' walk of Berry Street—then he loitered in his gait, in order to discover the shops he wanted. He bought meat, and a loaf of bread, candles, chips, and from a little retail yard he purchased a couple of hundredweights of coal. Some money still remained—all destined for them, but he did not yet know how best to spend it. Food, light, and warmth, he had instantly seen were necessary; for luxuries he would wait. Wilson's eyes filled with tears when he saw Barton enter with his purchases. He understood it all, and longed to be once more in work that he might help in some of these material ways, without feeling that he was using his son's money. But though "silver and gold he had none," he gave heart-service, and love-works of far more value. Nor was John Barton behind in these. "The fever" was (as it usually is in Manchester) of a low, putrid, typhoid kind; brought on by miserable living, filthy neighbourhood, and great depression of mind and body. It is virulent, malignant, and highly infectious. But the poor are fatalists with regard to infection; and well for them it is so, for in their crowded dwellings no invalid can be isolated. Wilson asked Barton if he thought he should catch it, and was laughed at for his idea.

The two men, rough, tender nurses as they were, lighted the fire, which smoked and puffed into the room as if it did not know the way up the damp, unused chimney. The very smoke seemed purifying and healthy in the thick clammy air. The children clamoured again for bread; but this time Barton took a piece first to the poor, helpless, hopeless woman, who still sat by the side of her husband, listening to his anxious miserable mutterings. She took the bread, when it was put into her hand, and broke a bit, but could not eat.

She was past hunger. She fell down on the floor with a heavy unresisting bang. The men looked puzzled. "She's well-nigh clemmed,"[6] said Barton. "Folk do say one mustn't give clemmed people much to eat; but, bless us, she'll eat nought."

"I'll tell yo what I'll do," said Wilson. "I'll take these two big lads, as does nought but fight, home to my missis for to-night, and I'll get a jug o' tea. Them women always does best with tea, and such-like slop."

So Barton was now left alone with a little child, crying (when it had done eating) for mammy; with a fainting, dead-like woman; and with the sick man, whose mutterings were rising up to screams and shrieks of agonized anxiety. He carried the woman to the fire, and chafed her hands. He looked around for something to raise her head. There was literally nothing but some loose bricks. However, those he got; and taking off his coat he covered them with it as well as he could. He pulled her feet to the fire, which now began to emit some faint heat. He looked round for water, but the poor woman had been too weak to drag herself out to the distant pump, and water there was none. He snatched the child, and ran up the area-steps to the room above, and borrowed their only saucepan with some water in it. Then he began, with the useful skill of a working-man, to make some gruel; and when it was hastily made, he seized a battered iron table-spoon (kept when many other little things had been sold in a lot), in order to feed baby, and with it he forced one or two drops between her clenched teeth. The mouth opened mechanically to receive more, and gradually she revived. She sat up and looked round; and recollecting all, fell down again in weak and passive despair. Her little child crawled to her, and wiped with its fingers the thick-coming tears which she now had strength to weep. It was now high time to attend to the man. He lay on straw, so damp and mouldy, no dog would have chosen it in preference to flags: over it was a piece of sacking, coming next to his worn skeleton of a body; above him was mustered every article of clothing that could be spared by mother or children this bitter weather; and in addition to his own, these might have given as much warmth as one blanket,

could they have been kept on him; but as he restlessly tossed to and fro, they fell off and left him shivering in spite of the burning heat of his skin. Every now and then he started up in his naked madness, looking like the prophet of woe in the fearful plague-picture, but he soon fell again in exhaustion, and Barton found he must be closely watched, lest in these falls he should injure himself against the hard brick floor.

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1848

Endnotes

- Note 1: "Don" is constantly used in Lancashire for "do"; as it was by our older writers. "And that may non Hors *don*."—Sir J. Mandeville
  "but for th' entent to *don* this sinne."—Chaucer [*Gaskell's note*].
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Cold. Teut. *haud*. Dutch, *koud* [*Gaskell's note*].Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Methodist.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: "Watch out for the water" (French); a warning issued when chamber pots containing human waste were emptied into the street.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: "Mither," to trouble and perplex. "I'm well mithered"—I'm well nigh crazed [*Gaskell's note*].Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Starved.Return to reference 6

Environmental Degradation

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE

Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859) was a French diplomat and writer. His *Democracy in America* (1835, 1840) uses his travels through America to consider the possibilities and limitations of democracy. In the text reproduced here, de Tocqueville provides a clear-eyed view of the human and environmental degradation caused by industrialization in England. Commonly regarded as the greatest industrial city in the most highly industrialized nation in the world, Manchester also displayed some of the worst consequences of unplanned urban development.

From Journeys to England and Ireland

Exterior Appearance of Manchester (*2nd July*)

An undulating plain, or rather a collection of little hills Below the hills a narrow river (the Irwell), which flows slowly to the Irish sea. Two streams (the Meddlock and the Irk) wind through the uneven ground and after a thousand bends, flow into the river. Three canals made by man unite their tranquil, lazy waters at the same point. On this watery land, which nature and art have contributed to keep damp, are scattered palaces and hovels. Everything in the exterior appearance of the city attests the individual powers of man; nothing the directing power of society. At every turn human liberty shows its capricious creative force. There is no trace of the slow continuous action of government.

Thirty or forty factories rise on the tops of the hills I have just described. Their six stories tower up; their huge enclosures give notice from afar of the centralisation of industry. The wretched dwellings of the poor are scattered haphazard around them. Round them stretches land uncultivated but without the charm of rustic nature, and still without the amenities of a town. The soil has been taken away, scratched and torn up in a thousand places, but it is not yet covered with the habitations of men. The land is given over to industry's use. The roads which connect the still-disjointed limbs of the great city, show, like the rest, every sign of hurried and unfinished work; the incidental activity of a population bent on gain, which seeks to amass gold so as to have everything else all at once, and, in the interval, mistrusts the niceties of life. Some of these roads are paved, but most of them are full of ruts and puddles into which foot or carriage wheel sinks deep. Heaps of dung, rubble from buildings, putrid, stagnant pools are found here and there among the houses and over the bumpy, pitted surfaces of the public places. No trace of surveyor's rod or spirit-level. Amid this noisome

labyrinth, this great, sombre stretch of brickwork, from time to time one is astonished at the sight of fine stone buildings with Corinthian columns. It might be a medieval town with the marvels of the nineteenth century in the middle of it. But who could describe the interiors of these quarters set apart, home of vice and poverty, which surround the huge palaces of industry and clasp them in their hideous folds. On ground below the level of the river and overshadowed on every side by immense workshops, stretches marshy land which widely spaced muddy ditches can neither drain nor cleanse. Narrow, twisting roads lead down to it. They are lined with one-story houses whose ill-fitting planks and broken windows show them up, even from a distance, as the last refuge a man might find between poverty and death. None-the-less the wretched people reduced to living in them can still inspire jealousy of their fellow beings. Below some of their miserable dwellings is a row of cellars to which a sunken corridor leads. Twelve to fifteen human beings are crowded pell-mell into each of these damp, repulsive holes.[1]

The fetid, muddy waters, stained with a thousand colours by the factories they pass, of one of the streams I mentioned before, wander slowly round this refuge of poverty. They are nowhere kept in place by quays; houses are built haphazard on their banks. Often from the top of their steep banks one sees an attempt at a road opening out through the debris of earth, and the foundations of some houses or the recent ruins of others. It is the Styx of this new Hades.[2]

Look up and all around this place you will see the huge palaces of industry. You will hear the noise of furnaces, the whistle of steam. These vast structures keep air and light out of the human habitations which they dominate; they envelop them in perpetual fog; here is the slave, there the master; there the wealth of some, here the poverty of most; there the organised effort of thousands produce, to the profit of one man, what society has not yet learnt to give. Here the weakness of the individual seems more feeble and helpless even than in the middle of a wilderness; here the effects, there the causes.

A sort of black smoke covers the city. The sun seen through it is a disc without rays. Under this half daylight 300,000 human beings are ceaselessly at work. A thousand noises disturb this damp, dark labyrinth, but they are not at all the ordinary sounds one hears in great cities.

The footsteps of a *busy* crowd, the crunching wheels of machinery, the shriek of steam from boilers, the regular beat of the looms, the heavy rumble of carts, those are the noises from which you can never escape in the sombre half-light of these streets. You will never hear the clatter of hoofs as the rich man drives back home or out on expeditions of pleasure. Never the gay shouts of people amusing themselves, or music heralding a holiday. You will never see smart folk strolling at leisure in the streets, or going out on innocent pleasure parties in the surrounding country. Crowds are ever hurrying this way and that in the Manchester streets, but their footsteps are brisk, their looks preoccupied, and their appearance sombre and harsh. Day and night the city echoes with street noises. But it is heavily loaded wagons lumbering slowly. . . .

From this foul drain the greatest stream of human industry flows out to fertilise the whole world. From this filthy sewer pure gold flows. Here humanity attains its most complete development and its most brutish; here civilisation works its miracles, and civilised man is turned back almost into a savage.

1835

Endnotes

- Note 1: Lines of washing block the roads. A coal fire lights the hovel and fills it with a damp and stuffy heat. No chairs [*Tocqueville's note in margin*].Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In Greek mythology, the River Styx forms the boundary between the land of the living and Hades, the land of the dead.Return to reference 2

CHARLES DICKENS

Charles Dickens (1812–1870) was one of the most popular novelists of the day. (See his headnote later in the volume for more information.) The fog he describes in this passage was a by-product of burning coal, used for both heating homes and powering the new steam engines; it was first noted in the thirteenth century, but intensified greatly with industrialization in the nineteenth. In 1952, the Great Smog of London caused thousands of deaths and ultimately led to the creation of the Clean Air Act.

From Bleak House

Chapter I. In Chancery

LONDON. Michaelmas Term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall.[1] Implacable November weather. As much mud in the streets, as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth, and it would not be wonderful to meet a Megalosaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephantine lizard up Hollborn-hill.[2] Smoke lowering down from chimney-pots, making a soft black drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full-grown snow-flakes—gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun. Dogs, undistinguishable in mire. Horses, scarcely better; splashed to their very blinkers. Foot passengers, jostling one another's umbrellas, in a general infection of ill-temper, and losing their foot-hold at street-corners, where tens of thousands of other foot passengers have been slipping and sliding since the day broke (if the day ever broke), adding new deposits to the crust upon crust of mud, sticking at those points tenaciously to the pavement, and accumulating at compound interest.

Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping, and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights.[3] Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs; fog lying out on the yards, and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gunwales of barges and small boats. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich[4] pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of their wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck. Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all round them, as if they were up in a balloon, and hanging in the misty clouds.

Gas looming through the fog in divers places in the streets, much as the sun may, from the spongey fields, be seen to loom by

husbandman and ploughboy. Most of the shops lighted two hours before their time—as the gas seems to know, for it has a haggard and unwilling look.

1853

Endnotes

- Note 1: One of the four Inns of Court in London. “Michaelmas Term”: first term of the academic year. “Lord Chancellor”: member of the cabinet responsible for overseeing courts’ efficiency and independence.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In Dickens’s time, a street in central London. “Megalosaurus”: a therapod dinosaur of the Jurassic period.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A county in southeast England. “Essex marshes”: Essex is a county in the east of England.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A district in southeast London.Return to reference 4

JOHN RUSKIN

John Ruskin (1819–1900) was a highly influential critic of art, culture, and politics. His social commentary, his aesthetics, and his conviction that art reflects social and political arrangements were influential for figures as diverse as William Morris, Oscar Wilde, and Mohandas Gandhi.

From The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century

Let me first assure my audience that I have no *arrière pensée*[1] in the title chosen for this lecture. I might, indeed, have meant, and it would have been only too like me to mean, any number of things by such a title;—but, to-night, I mean simply what I have said, and propose to bring to your notice a series of cloud phenomena, which, so far as I can weigh existing evidence, are peculiar to our own times; yet which have not hitherto received any special notice or description from meteorologists.

So far as the existing evidence, I say, of former literature can be interpreted, the storm-cloud—or more accurately plague-cloud, for it is not always stormy—which I am about to describe to you, never was seen but by now living, or *lately* living eyes. It is not yet twenty years that this—I may well call it, wonderful, cloud has been, in its essence, recognizable. There is no description of it, so far as I have read, by any ancient observer. Neither Homer nor Virgil, neither Aristophanes nor Horace, acknowledges any such clouds among those compelled by Jove.[2] Chaucer has no word of them, nor Dante; Milton none, nor Thomson.[3] In modern times, Scott, Wordsworth and Byron[4] are alike unconscious of them; and the most observant and descriptive of scientific men, De Saussure,[5] is utterly silent concerning them. Taking up the traditions of air from the year before Scott's death, I am able, by my own constant and close observation, to certify you that in the forty following years (1831 to 1871 approximately—for the phenomena in question came on gradually)—no such clouds as these are, and are now often for months without intermission, were ever seen in the skies of England, France, or Italy.

In those old days, when weather was fine, it was luxuriously fine; when it was bad—it was often abominably bad, but it had its fit of temper and was done with it—it didn't sulk for three months without

letting you see the sun,—nor send you one cyclone inside out, every Saturday afternoon, and another outside in, every Monday morning.

In fine weather the sky was either blue or clear in its light; the clouds, either white or golden, adding to, not abating, the lustre of the sky. In wet weather, there were two different species of clouds, —those of beneficent rain, which for distinction's sake I will call the non-electric rain-cloud, and those of storm, usually charged highly with electricity. The beneficent rain-cloud was indeed often extremely dull and grey for days together, but gracious nevertheless, felt to be doing good, and often to be delightful after drought; capable also of the most exquisite colouring, under certain conditions; and continually traversed in clearing by the rainbow:— and, secondly, the storm-cloud, always majestic, often dazzlingly beautiful, and felt also to be beneficent in its own way, affecting the mass of the air with vital agitation, and purging it from the impurity of all morbific elements.

In the entire system of the Firmament, thus seen and understood, there appeared to be, to all the thinkers of those ages, the incontrovertable and unmistakeable evidence of a Divine Power in creation, which had fitted, as the air for human breath, so the clouds for human sight and nourishment;—the Father who was in heaven feeding day by day the souls of His children with marvels, and satisfying them with bread, and so filling their hearts with food and gladness.

Their *hearts,* you will observe, it is said, not merely their bellies, —or indeed not at all, in this sense, their bellies—but the heart itself, with its blood for this life, and its faith for the next.

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The first time I recognised the clouds brought by the plague-wind as distinct in character was in walking back from Oxford, after a hard day's work, to Abingdon, in the early spring of 1871: it would take too long to give you any account this evening of the particulars which drew my attention to them; but during the following months I

had too frequent opportunities of verifying my first thoughts of them, and on the first of July in that year wrote the description of them which begins the 'Fors Clavigera'[6] of August, thus:—

"It is the first of July, and I sit down to write by the dismallest light that ever yet I wrote by; namely, the light of this mid-summer morning, in mid-England (Matlock, Derbyshire), in the year 1871.

For the sky is covered with grey cloud;—not rain-cloud, but a dry black veil, which no ray of sunshine can pierce; partly diffused in mist, feeble mist, enough to make distant objects unintelligible, yet without any substance, or wreathing, or colour of its own. And everywhere the leaves of the trees are shaking fitfully, as they do before a thunderstorm; only not violently, but enough to show the passing to and fro of a strange, bitter, blighting wind. Dismal enough, had it been the first morning of its kind that summer had sent. But during all this spring, in London, and at Oxford, through meagre March, through changelessly sullen April, through despondent May, and darkened June, morning after morning has come grey-shrouded thus.

And it is a new thing to me, and a very dreadful one. I am fifty years old, and more; and since I was five, have gleaned the best hours of my life in the sun of spring and summer mornings; and I never saw such as these, till now.

And the scientific men are busy as ants, examining the sun, and the moon, and the seven stars, and can tell me all about *them*, I believe, by this time; and how they move, and what they are made of.

And I do not care, for my part, two copper spangles how they move, nor what they are made of. I can't move them any other way than they go, nor make them of anything else, better than they are made. But I would care much and give much, if I could be told where this bitter wind comes from, and what *it* is made of.

For, perhaps, with forethought, and fine laboratory science, one might make it of something else.

It looks partly as if it were made of poisonous smoke; very possibly it may be: there are at least two hundred furnace chimneys

in a square of two miles on every side of me. But mere smoke would not blow to and fro in that wild way. It looks more to me as if it were made of dead men's souls—such of them as are not gone yet where they have to go, and may be flitting hither and thither, doubting, themselves, of the fittest place for them.

You know, if there *are* such things as souls, and if ever any of them haunt places where they have been hurt, there must be many about us, just now, displeased enough!"

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Blanched Sun,—blighted grass,—blinded man.—If, in conclusion, you ask me for any conceivable cause or meaning of these things—I can tell you none, according to your modern beliefs; but I can tell you what meaning it would have borne to the men of old time. Remember, for the last twenty years, England, and all foreign nations, either tempting her, or following her, have blasphemed the name of God deliberately and openly; and have done iniquity by proclamation, every man doing as much injustice to his brother as it is in his power to do. Of states in such moral gloom every seer of old predicted the physical gloom, saying, "The light shall be darkened in the heavens thereof, and the stars shall withdraw their shining." All Greek, all Christian, all Jewish prophecy insists on the same truth through a thousand myths; but of all the chief, to former thought, was the fable of the Jewish warrior and prophet, for whom the sun hasted not to go down, with which I leave you to compare at leisure the physical result of your own wars and prophecies, as declared by your own elect journal not fourteen days ago,—that the Empire of England, on which formerly the sun never set, has become one on which he never rises.

What is best to be done, do you ask me? The answer is plain. Whether you can affect the signs of the sky or not, you *can* the signs of the times. Whether you can bring the *sun* back or not, you can assuredly bring back your own cheerfulness, and your own honesty. You may not be able to say to the winds, "Peace; be still,"

but you can cease from the insolence of your own lips, and the troubling of your own passions. And all *that* it would be extremely well to do, even though the day *were* coming when the sun should be as darkness, and the moon as blood. But, the paths of rectitude and piety once regained, who shall say that the promise of old time would not be found to hold for us also?—"Bring ye all the tithes into my storehouse, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord God, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

1884

Endnotes

- Note 1: A mental reservation.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Another name for Jupiter, Roman god of the sky. Homer (8th c. B.C.E.), author of *The Odyssey*; Virgil (ca. 70–19 B.C.E), author of *The Aeneid*; Aristophanes (ca. 446–386 B.C.E.), author of *Lysistrata* among others; Horace (ca. 65–8 B.C.E.), author of *Ars Poetica*.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: James Thomson (1700–1748), author of *The Seasons*; Geoffrey Chaucer (1340s–1400), author of *The Canterbury Tales*; Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), author of *The Divine Comedy*; John Milton (1608–1674), author of *Paradise Lost*.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788–1824), Romantic poet; Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832), author of *Waverly* and other popular novels; William Wordsworth (1770–1850), Romantic poet and Poet Laureate (1843–50).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Horace Bénédict de Saussure (1740–1799), considered the founder of mountaineering and modern meteorology.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Ruskin's series of published letters (1871) addressed to the workingmen of Britain.Return to reference 6

THOMAS HARDY

Hardy (1840–1928) was one of the most innovative and popular writers of the late nineteenth century. His descriptions of the British countryside were often rhapsodic, though rarely sentimental. He was particularly interested in tracing the historical transformations that were taking place in the countryside as a result of industrialization.

From Tess of the d'Urbervilles

It is the threshing of the last wheat-rick at Flintcomb-Ash Farm. The dawn of the March morning is singularly inexpressive, and there is nothing to show where the eastern horizon lies. Against the twilight rises the trapezoidal top of the stack, which has stood forlornly here through the washing and bleaching of the wintry weather.

When Izz Huett and Tess arrived at the scene of operations only a rustling denoted that others had preceded them; to which, as the light increased, there were presently added the silhouettes of two men on the summit. They were busily 'unhaling' the rick, that is, stripping off the thatch before beginning to throw down the sheaves; and while this was in progress Izz and Tess, with the other women-workers in their whitey-brown pinners, stood waiting and shivering, Farmer Groby having insisted upon their being upon the spot thus early to get the job over if possible by the end of the day. Close under the eaves of the stack, and as yet barely visible, was the red tyrant that the women had come to serve—a timber-framed construction, with straps and wheels appertaining—the threshing-machine which, whilst it was going, kept up a despotic demand upon the endurance of their muscles and nerves.

A little way off there was another indistinct figure; this one black, with a sustained hiss that spoke of strength very much in reserve. The long chimney running up beside an ash-tree, and the warmth which radiated from the spot, explained without the necessity of much daylight that here was the engine which was to act as the *primum mobile*[1] of this little world. By the engine stood a dark motionless being, a sooty and grimy embodiment of tallness, in a sort of trance, with a heap of coals by his side: it was the engineman. The isolation of his manner and color lent him the appearance of a creature from Tophet,[2] who had strayed into the pellucid smokelessness of this region of yellow grain and pale soil,

with which he had nothing in common, to amaze and to discompose its aborigines.

What he looked he felt. He was in the agricultural world, but not of it. He served fire and smoke; these denizens of the fields served vegetation, weather, frost, and sun. He travelled with his engine from farm to farm, from county to county, for as yet the steam-threshing machine was itinerant in this part of Wessex. He spoke in a strange northern accent, his thoughts being turned inwards upon himself, his eye on his iron charge; hardly perceiving the scenes around him, and caring for them not at all; holding only strictly necessary intercourse with the natives, as if some ancient doom compelled him to wander here against his will in the service of his Plutonic master.[3] The long strap which ran from the driving-wheel of his engine to the red thresher under the rick was the sole tie-line between agriculture and him.

While they uncovered the sheaves he stood apathetic beside his portable repository of force, round whose hot blackness the morning air quivered. He had nothing to do with preparatory labour. His fire was waiting incandescent, his steam was at high pressure, in a few seconds he could make the long strap move at an invisible velocity. Beyond its extent the environment might be corn, straw, or chaos; it was all the same to him. If any of the autochthonous idlers asked him what he called himself, he replied shortly 'an engineer.'

The rick was unhaled by full daylight; the men then took their places, the women mounted, and the work began. Farmer Groby—or, as they called him, 'he'—had arrived ere this, and by his orders Tess was placed on the platform of the machine, close to the man who fed it; her business being to untie every sheaf of corn handed on to her by Izz Huett, who stood next, but on the rick, so that the feeder could seize it and spread it over the revolving drum, which whisked out every grain in one moment.

They were soon in full progress, after a preparatory hitch or two, which rejoiced the hearts of those who hated machinery. The work sped on till break fast-time, when the thresher was stopped for half an hour; and on starting again after the meal the whole

supplementary strength of the farm was thrown into the labour of constructing the straw-rick, which began to grow beside the stack of corn. A hasty lunch was eaten as they stood, without leaving their positions, and then another couple of hours brought them near to dinner-time; the inexorable wheels continuing to spin, and the penetrating hum of the thresher to thrill to the very marrow all who were near the revolving wire-cage.

The old men on the rising straw-rick talked of the past days when they had been accustomed to thresh with flails on the oaken barn-floor; when everything, even to the winnowing, was effected by hand-labour, which, to their thinking, though slow, produced better results. Those, too, on the corn-rick talked a little; but the perspiring ones at the machine, including Tess, could not lighten their duties by the exchange of many words. It was the ceaselessness of the work which tried her so severely, and began to make her wish that she had never come to Flintcomb-Ash. The women on the corn-rick—Marian, who was one of them, in particular—could stop to drink ale or cold tea from the flagon now and then, or to exchange a few gossiping remarks while they wiped their faces or cleared the fragments of straw and husk from their clothing; but for Tess there was no respite; for, as the drum never stopped, the man who fed it could not stop, and she, who had to supply the man with untied sheaves, could not stop either.

1891

Endnotes

- Note 1: Central source of motion or action.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Hell.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Pluto was god of the underworld; this is also a reference to coal.Return to reference 3

HENRY MAYHEW
1812–1887

Henry Mayhew was a journalist, playwright, editor, and observer of urban life. Born in London, and educated at the Westminster School, Mayhew ran away to sea at the age of twelve. He served with the East India Company as a midshipman for several years. Upon his return to England, he began training for the law only to turn to journalism. In 1835, Mayhew left England again—this time to escape debts—and went to Paris; there he found a community of expatriate authors, including novelist William Makepeace Thackeray and playwright Douglas Jerrold. In 1841, he co-founded the satirical magazine, *Punch*, which became a surprise success.

Mayhew was best known for the extensive series of articles he wrote for the *Morning Chronicle* that were later collected as the three volumes of *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851, with a fourth volume in 1861). Mayhew's work, opinionated, often racist, and unsystematic as it is, has nevertheless been identified as early sociology. Regardless of how it is categorized, there is no question that his detailed descriptions of the daily lives of London's poorest inhabitants had a significant impact on middle-class readers. At a moment when industrialization was leading to an explosion of urban populations—and the development of massive urban slums—many city dwellers felt alienated from and mystified by their neighbors. Mayhew's work (along with that of Friedrich Engels, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Charles Dickens, all included in this volume) sought to

overcome that division. Interestingly, at least some London street traders were so insulted by Mayhew's assessment of their lives and characters that they established a Street Traders' Protection Association to defend themselves against it.

London Labor and the London Poor

From *Volume 1. The Street-Folk*

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OF THE LONDON STREET-FOLK

Those who obtain their living in the streets of the metropolis are a very large and varied class; indeed, the means resorted to in order "to pick up a crust," as the people call it, in the public thoroughfares (and such in many instances it *literally* is), are so multifarious that the mind is long baffled in its attempts to reduce them to scientific order or classification.

It would appear, however, that the street-people may be all arranged under six distinct genera or kinds.

These are severally:

I. STREET-SELLERS.
II. STREET-BUYERS.
III. STREET-FINDERS.
IV. STREET-PERFORMERS, ARTISTS, AND SHOWMEN.
V. STREET-ARTISANS, or WORKING PEDLERS: and
VI. STREET-LABORERS.

The first of these divisions—the STREET-SELLERS—includes many varieties; viz.—

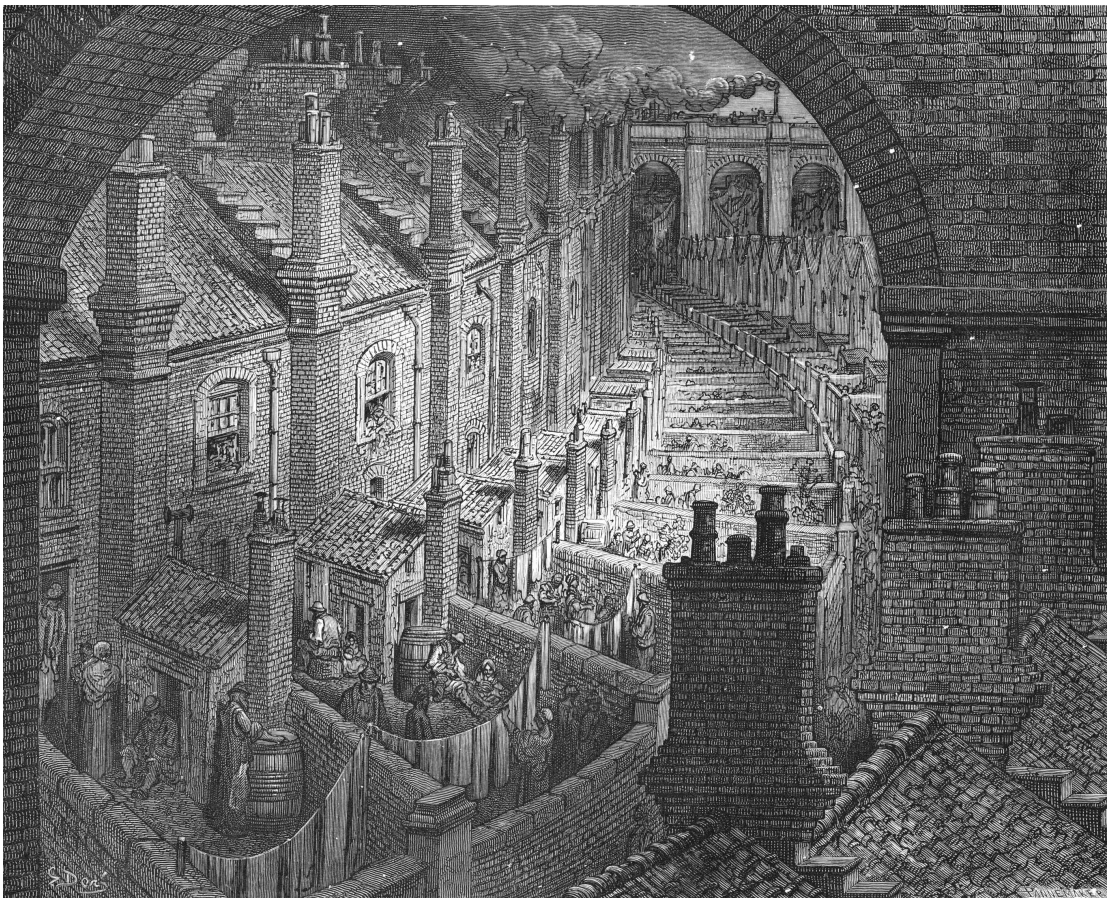
1. *The Street-sellers of Fish,* &c.—"wet," "dry," and shell-fish—and poultry, game, and cheese.

2. *The Street-sellers of Vegetables,* fruit (both "green" and "dry"), flowers, trees, shrubs, seeds, and roots, and "green stuff" (as watercresses, chickwood and grun'sel, and turf).

3. *The Street-sellers of Eatables and Drinkables,*—Including the venders of fried fish, hot eels, pickled whelks, sheep's trotters, ham sandwiches, peas'-soup, hot green peas, penny pies, plum "duff," meat-puddings, baked potatoes, spice-cakes, muffins and crumpets, Chelsea buns, sweetments, brandy-balls, cough-drops, and cat and dog's meat—such constituting the principal eatables sold in the street; while under the head of street-drinkables may be specified tea and coffee, ginger-beer, lemonade, hot wine, new milk from the cow, asses' milk, curds and whey, and occasionally water.

4. *The Street-sellers of Stationery, Literature, and the Fine Arts*—among whom are comprised the flying stationers, or standing and running patterers; the long-song-sellers; the wall-song-sellers (or "pinners-up," as they are technically termed); the ballad sellers; the venders of playbills, second editions of newspapers, back numbers of periodicals and old books, almanacs, pocket-books, memorandum books, note paper, sealing-wax, pens, pencils, stenographic cards, valentines, engravings, manuscript music, images, and gelatine poetry cards.

5. *The Street-sellers of Manufactured Articles,* which class comprises a large number of individuals, as, (a) the venders of chemical articles of manufacture—viz., blacking, lucifers, cornsalves, grease-removing compositions, plating-balls, poison for rats, crackers, detonating-balls, and cigar-lights. (*b*) The venders of metal articles of manufacture—razors and pen-knives, tea-trays, dog-collars, and key-rings, hardware, bird-cages, small coins, medals, jewelry, tinware, tools, card-counters, red-herring-toasters, trivets, gridirons, and Dutch ovens. (*c*) The vendors of china and stone articles of manufacture—as cups and saucers, jugs, vases, chimney ornaments, and stone fruit. (*d*) The venders of linen, cotton, and silken articles of manufacture—as sheeting, table-covers, cotton, tapes and thread, boot and stay-laces, haberdashery, pretended smuggled goods, shirt-buttons, etc., etc.; and (*e*) the venders of miscellaneous articles of manufacture—as cigars, pipes, and snuff-boxes, spectacles, combs, "lots," rhubarb, sponges, wash-leather, paper-hangings, dolls, Bristol toys, sawdust, and pin-cushions.



London. "Over the city by the railway" was one of the 180 drawings by French artist Gustave Doré (1832–1883) that appeared in his book *London: A Pilgrimage* (1872).

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6. *The Street-sellers of Second-hand Articles,* of whom there are again four separate classes; as (*a*) those who sell old metal articles—viz. old knives and forks, keys, tin-ware, tools, and marine stores generally; (*b*) those who sell old linen articles—as old sheeting for towels; (*c*) those who sell old glass and crockery—including bottles, old pans and pitchers, old looking-glasses, &c.; and (*d*) those who sell old miscellaneous articles—as old shoes, old clothes, old saucepan lids, &c., &c.

7. *The Street-sellers of Live Animals*—including the dealers in dogs, squirrels, birds, gold and silver fish, and tortoises.

8. *The Street-sellers of Mineral Productions and Curiosities*—as red and white sand, silver sand, coals, coke, salt, spar ornaments,

and shells.

These, so far as my experience goes, exhaust the whole class of street-sellers, and they appear to constitute nearly three fourths of the entire number of individuals obtaining a subsistence in the streets of London.

The next class are the STREET-BUYERS, under which denomination come the purchasers of hare-skins, old clothes, old umbrellas, bottles, glass, broken metal, rags, waste paper, and dripping.

After these we have the STREET-FINDERS, or those who, as I said before, literally "pick up" their living in the public thoroughfares. They are the "pure" pickers, or those who live by gathering dogs'-dung: the cigar-end finders, or "hard-ups," as they are called, who collect the refuse pieces of smoked cigars from the gutters, and having dried them, sell them as tobacco to the very poor; the dredgermen or coal-finders; the mud-larks, the bone-grubbers; and the sewer-hunters.

Under the fourth division, or that of the STREET-PERFORMERS, ARTISTS, AND SHOWMEN, are likewise many distinct callings.

1. *The Street-Performers,* who admit of being classified into (*a*) mountebanks—or those who enact puppet-shows, as Punch and Judy, the fantoccini, and the Chinese shades. (*b*) The street-performers of feats of strength and dexterity—as "acrobats" or posturers, "equilibrists" or balancers, stiff and bending tumblers, jugglers, conjurers, sword-swallowers, "salamanders" or fire-eaters, swordsmen, etc. (*c*) The street-performers with trained animals—as dancing dogs, performing monkeys, trained birds and mice, cats and hares, sapient pigs, dancing boars, and tame camels. (*d*) The street-actors—as clowns, "Billy Barlows," "Jim Crows," and others.

2. *The Street Showmen*, including shows of (a) extraordinary persons—as giants, dwarfs, Albinoes, spotted boys, and pig-faced ladies. (*b*) Extraordinary animals—as alligators, calves, horses and pigs with six legs or two heads, industrious fleas, and happy families. (*c*) Philosophic instruments—as the microscope, telescope, thaumascope.[1] (*d*) Measuring-machines—as weighing, lifting, measuring, and striking machines; and (*e*) miscellaneous shows—

such as peep-shows, glass ships, mechanical figures, wax-work shows, pugilistic shows, and fortune-telling apparatus.

8. *The Street-Artists*—as black profile-cutters, blind paper-cutters, "screevers" or draughtsmen in colored chalks on the pavement, writers without hands, and readers without eyes.

4. *The Street Dancers*—as street Scotch girls, sailors, slack and tight rope dancers, dancers on stilts, and comic dancers.

5. *The Street Musicians*—as the street bands (English and German), players of the guitar, harp, bagpipes, hurdy-gurdy, dulcimer, musical bells, cornet, tom-tom, &c.

6. *The Street Singers,* as the singers of glees, ballads, comic songs, n***** melodies, psalms, serenaders, reciters, and improvisatori.

7. *The Proprietors of Street Games,* as swings, highflyers, roundabouts, puff-and-darts, rifle shooting, down the dolly, spin-'em-rounds, prick the garter, thimble-rig, etc.

Then comes the Fifth Division of the Street-Folk, viz., the STREET-ARTISANS, or WORKING PEDLERS;

These may be severally arranged into three distinct groups—(1) Those who *make* things in the streets; (2) Those who *mend* things in the streets; and (8) Those who *make* things *at home* and *sell* them in the *streets.*

1. Of *those who make things in the streets* there are the following varieties: (*a*) the metal workers—such as toasting-fork makers, pin makers, engravers, tobacco-stopper makers. (*b*) The textile-workers —stocking-weavers, cabbage-net makers, night-cap knitters, doll-dress knitters. (*c*) The miscellaneous workers,—the wooden spoon makers, the leather brace and garter makers, the printers, and the glass-blowers.

2. *Those who mend things in the streets,* consist of broken china and glass menders, clock menders, umbrella menders, kettle menders, chair menders, grease removers, hat cleaners, razor and knife grinders, glaziers, traveling bell-hangers, and knife cleaners.

3. *Those who make things at home and sell them in the streets,* are (*a*) the wood workers—as the makers of clothes-pegs, clothes-

props, skewers, needle-cases, foot-stools and clothes-horses, chairs and tables, tea-caddies, writing-desks, drawers, work-boxes, dressing-cases, pails and tubs. (*b*) The trunk, hat, and bonnet-box makers, and the cane and rush basket makers. (*c*) The toy makers—such as Chinese roarers, children's windmills, flying birds and fishes, feathered cocks, black velvet cats and sweeps, paper houses, cardboard carriages, little copper pans and kettles, tiny tin fireplaces, children's watches, Dutch dolls, buy-a-brooms, and guttapercha[2] heads. (*d*) The apparel makers—viz., the makers of women's caps, boys and men's cloth caps, night-caps, straw bonnets, children's dresses, watch-pockets, bonnet shapes, silk bonnets, and gaiters. (*e*) The metal workers,—as the makers of fire-guards, bird-cages, the wire workers. (*f*) The miscellaneous workers—or makers of ornaments for stoves, chimney ornaments, artificial flowers in pots and in nosegays, plaster-of-Paris night-shades, brooms, brushes, mats, rugs, hearthstones, firewood, rush matting, and hassocks.

Of the last division, or STREET-LABORERS, there are four classes:

1. *The Cleaners*—such as scavengers, nightmen, flushermen, chimney-sweeps, dustmen, crossing-sweepers, "street-orderlies," laborers to sweeping-machines and to watering-carts.

2. *The Lighters and Waterers*—or the turn cocks and the lamplighters.

3. *The Street-Advertisers*—viz., the bill-stickers, bill-deliverers, boardmen, men to advertising vans, and wall and pavement stencilers.

4. *The Street-Servants*—as horse holders, linkmen, coach-hirers, street-porters, shoe-blacks.

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Endnotes

- Note 1: A popular toy that spins two images on disks very quickly to make them look like one.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Guttapercha (or gutta-percha) is a type of solidified latex, made from trees; it resembles rubber.Return to reference 2

OF THE COSTER-GIRLS

THE costermongers,[3] taken as a body, entertain the most imperfect idea of the sanctity of marriage. To their undeveloped minds it merely consists in the fact of a man and woman living together, and sharing the gains they may each earn by selling in the street. The father and mother of the girl look upon it as a convenient means of shifting the support of their child over to another's exertions; and so thoroughly do they believe this to be the end and aim of matrimony, that the expense of a church ceremony is considered as a useless waste of money, and the new pair are received by their companions as cordially as if every form of law and religion had been complied with.

The notions of morality among these people agree strangely, as I have said, with those of many savage tribes—indeed, it would be curious if it were otherwise. They are a part of the Nomads of England, neither knowing nor caring for the enjoyments of home. The hearth, which is so sacred a symbol to all civilized races as being the spot where the virtues of each succeeding generation are taught and encouraged, has no charms to them. The tap-room is the father's chief abiding-place; while to the mother the house is only a better kind of *tent.* She is away at the stall, or hawking her goods from morning till night, while the children are left to play away the day in the court or alley, and pick their morals out of the gutter. So long as the limbs gain strength the parent cares for nothing else. As the young ones grow up, their only notions of wrong are formed by what the policeman will permit them to do. If we, who have known from babyhood the kindly influences of a home, require, before we are thrust out into the world to get a living for ourselves, that our perceptions of good and evil should be quickened and brightened (the same as our perceptions of truth and falsity) by the experience and counsel of those who are wiser and better than ourselves,—if, indeed, it needed a special creation and example to teach the best and strongest of us the law of right, how bitterly must the children of the street-folk require tuition, training, and advice, when from

their very cradles (if, indeed, they ever knew such luxuries) they are doomed to witness in their parents, whom they naturally believe to be their superiors, habits of life in which passion is the sole rule of action, and where every appetite of our animal nature is indulged in without the least restraint.

I say thus much because I am anxious to make others feel, as I do myself, that *we* are the culpable parties in these matters. That they, poor things, should do as they do is but human nature—but that *we* should allow them to remain thus destitute of every blessing vouchsafed to ourselves—that we should willingly share what we enjoy with our brethren at the Antipodes, and yet leave those who are nearer and who, therefore, should be dearer to us, to want even the commonest moral necessaries, is a paradox that gives to the zeal of our Christianity a strong savor of the chicanery of Cant.

The costermongers strongly resemble the North American Indians in their conduct to their wives. They can understand that it is the duty of the women to contribute to the happiness of the man, but can not feel that there is a reciprocal duty from the man to the woman. The wife is considered as an inexpensive servant, and the disobedience of a wish is punished with blows. She must work early and late, and to the husband must be given the proceeds of her labor. Often when the man is in one of his drunken fits—which sometimes last two or three days continuously—she must by her sole exertions find food for herself and him too. To live in peace with him, there must be no murmuring, no tiring under-work, no fancied cause for jealousy—for if there be, she is either beaten into submission or cast adrift to begin life again—as another's leavings.

The story of one coster girl's life may be taken as a type of the many. When quite young she is placed out to nurse with some neighbor, the mother—if a fond one—visiting the child at certain periods of the day, for the purpose of feeding it, or sometimes, knowing the round she has to make, having the infant brought to her at certain places, to be "suckled." As soon as it is old enough to go alone, the court is its play-ground, the gutter its school-room, and under the care of an elder sister the little one passes the day,

among children whose mothers like her own are too busy out in the streets helping to get the food, to be able to mind the family at home. When the girl is strong enough, she in her turn is made to assist the mother by keeping guard over the younger children, or, if there be none, she is lent out to carry about a baby, and so made to add to the family income by gaining her sixpence weekly. Her time is from the earliest years fully occupied; indeed, her parents can not afford to keep her without doing and getting *something.* Very few of the children receive the least education. "The parents," I am told, "never give their minds to learning, for they say, 'What's the use of it? *that* won't yarn a gal a living.' " Every thing is sacrificed—as, indeed, under the circumstances it must be—in the struggle to live—ay! and to live *merely.* Mind, heart, soul, are all absorbed in the belly. The rudest form of animal life, physiologists tell us, is simply a locomotive stomach. Verily, it would appear as if our social state had a tendency to make the highest animal sink into the lowest.

At about seven years of age the girls first go into the streets to sell. A shallow-basket is given to them, with about two shillings for stock-money, and they hawk, according to the time of year, either oranges, apples, or violets; some begin their street education with the sale of water-cresses. The money earned by this means is strictly given to the parents. Sometimes—though rarely—a girl who has been unfortunate during the day will not dare to return home at night, and then she will sleep under some dry arch or about some market, until the morrow's gains shall insure her a safe reception and shelter in her father's room.

The life of the coster-girls is as severe as that of the boys. Between four and five in the morning they have to leave home for the markets, and sell in the streets until about nine. Those that have more kindly parents, return then to breakfast, but many are obliged to earn the morning's meal for themselves. After breakfast, they generally remain in the streets until about ten o'clock at night; many having nothing during all that time but one meal of bread and butter and coffee, to enable them to support the fatigue of walking from street to street with the heavy basket on their heads. In the course

of a day, some girls eat as much as a pound of bread, and very seldom get any meat, unless it be on a Sunday.

There are many poor families that, without the aid of these girls, would be forced into the workhouse. They are generally of an affectionate disposition, and some will perform acts of marvelous heroism to keep together the little home. It is not at all unusual for mere children of fifteen to walk their eight or ten miles a day, carrying a basket of nearly two hundred weight on their heads. A journey to Woolwich and back, or to the towns near London, is often undertaken to earn the 1*s*. 6*d*. their parents are anxiously waiting for at home.

Very few of these girls are married to the men they afterward live with. Their courtship is usually a very short one; for, as one told me, "the life is such a hard one, that a girl is ready to get rid of a *little* of the labor at any price." The coster-lads see the girls at market, and if one of them be pretty, and a boy take a fancy to her, he will make her bargains for her, and carry her basket home. Sometimes a coster working his rounds will feel a liking for a wench selling her goods in the street, and will leave his burrow to go and talk with her. A girl seldom takes up with a lad before she is sixteen, though some of them, when barely fifteen or even fourteen, will pair off. They court for a time, going to raffles and "gaffs" together, and then the affair is arranged. The girl tells her parents, "she's going to keep company with so-and-so," packs up what things she has, and goes at once, without a word of remonstrance from either father or mother. A furnished room, at 4*s*. a week, is taken, and the young couple begin life. The lad goes out as usual with his barrow, and the girl goes out with her basket, often working harder for her lover than she had done for her parents. They go to market together, and at about nine o'clock her day's selling begins. Very often she will take out with her in the morning what food she requires during the day, and never return home until eleven o'clock at night.

The men generally behave very cruelly to the girls they live with. They are as faithful to them as if they were married, but they are jealous in the extreme. To see a man talking to their girl is sufficient

to insure the poor thing a beating. They sometimes ill-treat them horribly—most unmercifully indeed—nevertheless the girls say they can not help loving them still, and continue working for them, as if they experienced only kindness at their hands. Some of them are gentler and more considerate in their treatment of them, but by far the larger portion are harsh and merciless. Often when the Saturday night's earnings of the two have been large, the man will take the entire money, and as soon as the Sunday's dinner is over, commence drinking hard, and continue drunk for two or three days together, until the funds are entirely exhausted. The women never gamble; they say, "it gives them no excitement." They prefer, if they have a spare moment in the evening, sitting near the fire, making up and patching their clothes. "Ah, sir," said a girl to me, "a neat gown does a deal with a man; he always likes a girl best when every body else likes her too." On a Sunday they clean their room for the week and go for a treat, if they can persuade their young men to take them out in the afternoon, either to Chalk Farm or Battersea Fields—[4] "where there's plenty of life."

After a girl has once grown accustomed to a street-life, it is almost impossible to wean her from it. The muscular irritability begotten by continued wandering makes her unable to rest for any time in one place, and she soon, if put to any *settled* occupation, gets to crave for the severe exercise she formerly enjoyed. The least restraint will make her sigh after the perfect liberty of the coster's "roving life." As an instance of this I may relate a fact that has occurred within the last six months. A gentleman of high literary repute, struck with the heroic strugglings of a coster Irish girl to maintain her mother, took her to his house with the view of teaching her the duties of a servant. At first the transition was a painful one to the poor thing. Having traveled barefoot through the streets since a mere child, the pressure of shoes was intolerable to her, and in the evening or whenever a few minutes' rest could be obtained, the boots were taken off, for with them on she could enjoy no ease. The perfect change of life, and the novelty of being in a new place, reconciled her for some time to the loss of her liberty. But no sooner

did she hear from her friends, that sprats were again in the market,[5] than, as if there were some magical influence in the fish, she at once requested to be freed from the confinement, and permitted to return to her old calling.

Such is the history of the lower class of girls, though this lower class, I regret to say, constitutes by far the greater portion of the whole. Still I would not for a moment have it inferred that *all* are bad. There are many young girls getting their living, or rather helping to get the living of others in the streets, whose goodness, considering the temptations and hardships besetting such an occupation, approximates to the marvelous. As a type of the more prudent class of coster-girls, I would also the following narrative received from the lips of a young woman in answer to a series of questions.

Endnotes

- Note 3: Costermongers are street sellers of fruits, vegetables, and other goods.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Open spaces for strolling, in North and South London, respectively.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The season for catching sprats (a type of small fish) began on November 9 and ended at Christmas.Return to reference 5

THE LIFE OF A COSTER-GIRL

I wished to have obtained a statement from the girl whose portrait is here given, but she was afraid to give the slightest information about the habits of her companions, lest they should recognize her by the engraving and persecute her for the revelations she might make. After disappointing me some dozen times, I was forced to seek out some other coster girl.

The one I fixed upon was a fine-grown young woman of eighteen. She had a habit of courtesying to every question that was put to her. Her plaid shawl was tied over the breast, and her cotton-velvet bonnet was crushed in with carrying her basket. She seemed dreadfully puzzled where to put her hands, at one time tucking them under her shawl, warming them at the fire, or measuring the length of her apron, and when she answered a question she invariably addressed the fireplace. Her voice was husky from shouting apples.

"My mother has been in the streets selling all her lifetime. Her uncle learnt her the markets and she learnt me. When business grew bad she said to me, 'Now you shall take care on the stall, and I'll go and work out charing.' The way she learnt me the markets was to judge of the weight of the baskets of apples, and then said she, 'Always bate 'em down, a'most a half.' I always liked the street-life very well, that was if I was selling. I have mostly kept a stall myself, but I've known gals as walk about with apples, as have told me that the weight of the baskets is sich that the neck cricks, and when the load is took off, it's just as if you'd a stiff neck, and the head feels as light as a feather. The gals begins working very early at our work; the parents makes them go out when a'most babies. There's a little gal, I'm sure she an't more than half-past seven, that stands selling water-cresses next my stall, and mother was saying, 'Only look there, how that little one has to get her living afore she a'most known what a penn'orth means.'

"There's six on us in family, and father and mother makes eight. Father used to do odd jobs with the gas-pipes in the streets, and when work was slack we had very hard times of it. Mother always

liked being with us at home, and used to manage to keep us employed out of mischief—she'd give us an old gown to make into pinafores for the children and such like! She's been very good to us, has mother, and so's father. She always liked to hear us read to her while she was washing or such like! and then we big ones had to learn the little ones. But when father's work got slack, if she had no employment charing, she'd say, 'Now I'll go and buy a bushel of apples,' and then she'd turn out and get a penny that way. I suppose by sitting at the stall from nine in the morning till the shops shuts up —say ten o'clock at night, I can earn about 1*s*. 6*d.* a day. It's all according to the apples—whether they're good or not—what we makes. If I'm unlucky, mother will say, 'Well, I'll go out to-morrow and see what *I* can do;' and if I've done well, she'll say, 'Come you're a good hand at it; you've done famous.' Yes, mother's very fair that way. Ah! there's many a gal I knows whose back has to suffer if she don't sell her stock well; but, thank God! I never get more than a blowing up. My parents is very fair to me.

"I dare say there aint ten out of a hundred gals what's living with men, what's been married Church of England fashion. I know plenty myself, but I don't, indeed, think it right. It seems to me that the gals is fools to be 'ticed away, but, in coorse, they needn't go without they likes. This is why I don't think it's right. Perhaps a man will have a few words with his gal, and he'll say, 'Oh! I aint obligated to keep her!' and he'll turn her out: and then where's that poor gal to go! Now, there's a gal I knows as came to me no later than this here week, and she had a dreadful swole face and a awful black eye; and I says, 'Who's done that!' and she says, says she, 'Why, Jack'—just in that way; and then she says, says she, 'I'm going to take a warrant out to-morrow.' Well, he gets the warrant that same night, but she never appears again him, for fear of getting more beating. That don't seem to me to be like married people ought to be. Besides, if parties is married, they ought to bond to each other; and they won't, for sartain, if they're only living together. A man as is married is obligated to deep his wife if they quarrels or not; and he says to himself, says he, 'Well, I may as well live happy, like.' But if he can turn a poor gal off, as soon as he tires of her, he begins to have

noises with her, and then gets quit of her altogether. Again, the men takes the money of the gals, and in coorse ought to treat 'em well—which they don't. This is another reason: when the gal is in the family way, the lads mostly sends them to the workhouse to lay in,[6] and only goes sometimes to take them a bit of tea and shuggar; but, in coorse, married men wouldn't behave in such likes to their poor wives. After a quarrel, too, a lad goes and takes up with another young gal, and that isn't pleasant for the first one. The first step to ruin is them places of 'penny gaffs,' for they heers things there as oughtn't to be said to young gals. Besides, the lads is very insinivating, and after leaving them places will give a gal a drop of beer, and make her half tipsy, and then they makes their arrangements. I've often heard the boys boasting of having ruined gals, for all the world as if they was the first noblemen in the land.

"It would be a good thing if these sort of goings on could be stopped. It's half the parents' fault; for if a gal can't get a living, they turns her out into the streets, and then what's to become of her? I'm sure the gals, if they was married, would be happier, because they couldn't be beat worse. And if they was married, they'd get a nice home about 'em; whereas, if they's only living together, they takes a furnished room. I'm sure, too, that it's a bad plan; for I've heerd the gals themselves say, 'Ah! I wish I'd never seed Jack' (or Tom, or whatever it is); 'I'm sure I'd never be half so bad but for him.'

"Only last night father was talking about religion. We often talks about religion. Father has told me that God made the world, and I've heerd him talk about the first man and woman as was made and lived—it must be more than a hundred years ago—but I don't like to speak on what I don't know. Father, too, has told me about our Savior what was nailed on a cross to suffer for such poor people as we is. Father has told us, too, about his giving a great many poor people a penny loaf and a bit of fish each, which proves him to have been a very kind gentleman. The Ten Commandments was made by him, I've heerd say, and he performed them too among other miracles. Yes! this is part of what our Savior tells us. We are to forgive every body, and do nobody no injury. I don't think I could

forgive an enemy if she injured me very much; I'm sure I don't know why I couldn't, unless it is that I'm poor, and never learnt to do it. If a gal stole my shawl and didn't return it back or give me the value on it, I couldn't forgive her; but if she told me she lost it off her back, I shouldn't be so hard on her. We poor gals aint very religious, but we are better than the men. We all of us thanks God for every thing—even for a fine day; as for sprats, we always says they're God's blessing for the poor, and thinks it hard of the Lord Mayor not to let 'em come in afore the ninth of November, just because he wants to dine off them—which he always do. Yes, we knows for certain that they eats plenty of sprats at the Lord Mayor's 'blanket.' They say in the Bible that the world was made in six days: the beasts, the birds, the fish, and all—and sprats was among them in coorse. There was only one house at that time as was made, and that was the Ark for Adam and Eve and their family. It seems very wonderful indeed how all this world was done so quick. I should have thought that England alone would have took double the time; shouldn't you, sir? But then it says in the Bible, God Almighty's a just and true God, and in coorse time would be nothing to him. When a good person is dying, we says, 'The Lord has called upon him, and he must go,' but I can't think what it means, unless it is that an angel comes—like when we're a-dreaming—and tells the party he's wanted in heaven. I know where heaven is; it's above the clouds, and they're placed there to prevent us seeing into it. That's where all the good people go, but I'm afeerd, "—she continued solemnly—" there's very few costers among the angels—'specially those as deceives poor gals.



The Wallflower Girl. This is one of the many engravings included in Mayhew's volume.

"No, I don't think this world could well go on forever. There's a great deal of ground in it, certainly, and it seems very strong at

present; but they say there's to be a flood on the earth, and earthquakes, and that will destroy it. The earthquake ought to have took place some time ago, as people tells me, but I never heard any more about it. If we cheats in the streets, I know we shan't go to heaven; but it's very hard upon us, for if we didn't cheat we couldn't live, profits is so bad. It's the same with the shops, and I suppose the young men there won't go to heaven neither; but if people won't give the money, both costers and tradesmen must cheat, and that's very hard. Why, look at apples! Customers want them for less than they cost us, and so we are forced to shove in bad ones as well as good ones: and if we're to suffer for that, it does seem to me dreadful cruel."

Curious and extravagant as this statement may perhaps appear to the uninitiated, nevertheless it is here given as it was spoken; and it was spoken with an earnestness that proved the poor girl looked upon it as a subject, the solemnity of which forced her to be truthful.

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Endnotes

- Note 6: To give birth.Return to reference 6

From *Volume 4. Those That Will Not Work*

Are those spare, snake-eyed Asiatics who walk the streets, coolly dressed in Manchester cottons, or chintz of a pattern commonly used for bed-furniture, to which the resemblance is carried out by the dark, polished colour of the thin limbs which it envelopes. They very often affect to be converts to the Christian religion, and give away tracts;[1] with the intention of entrapping the sympathy of elderly ladies. They assert that they have been high-caste Brahmins,[2] but as untruth, even when not acting professionally, is habitual to them, there is not the slightest dependence to be placed on what they say. Sometimes, in the winter, they "do shallow," that is, stand on the kerb-stone of the pavement, in their thin, ragged clothes, and shiver as with cold and hunger, or crouch against a wall and whine like a whipped animal; at others they turn out with a small, barrel-shaped drum, on which they make a monotonous noise with their fingers, to which music they sing and dance. Or they will "stand pad with a fakement," *i.e.* wear a placard upon their breasts, that describes them as natives of Madagascar, in distress, converts to Christianity, anxious to get to a seaport where they can work their passage back. This is a favourite artifice with Lascars—or they will sell lucifers,[3] or sweep a crossing, or do anything where their picturesque appearance, of which they are proud and conscious, can be effectively displayed. They are as cunning as they look, and can detect a sympathetic face among a crowd. They never beg of soldiers, or sailors, to whom they always give a wide berth as they pass them in the streets.

From the extraordinary mendacity of this race of beggars—a mendacity that never falters, hesitates, or stumbles, but flows on in an unbroken stream of falsehood,—it is difficult to obtain any reliable information respecting them. I have, however, many reasons for believing that the following statement, which was made to me by a very dirty and distressed Indian, is moderately true. The man spoke English like a cockney[4] of the lowest order. I shall not attempt to

describe the peculiar accent or construction which he occasionally gave to it.

"My name is Joaleeka. I do not know where I was born. I never knew my father. I remember my mother very well. From the first of my remembrance I was at Dumdum,[5] where I was servant to a European officer—a great man—a prince—who had more than a hundred servants beside me. When he went away to fight, I followed among others—I was with the baggage. I never fought myself, but I have heard the men (Sepoys)[6] say that the prince, or general, or colonel, liked nothing so well as fighting, except tiger-hunting. He was a wonderful man, and his soldiers liked him very much. I travelled over a great part of India with Europeans. I went up country as far as Secunderabad,[7] and learned to speak English very well—so well that, when I was quite a young man, I was often employed as interpreter, for I caught up different Indian languages quickly. At last I got to interpret so well that I was recommended to ——, a great native prince who was coming over to England. I was not his interpreter, but interpreter to his servants. We came to London. We stopped in an hotel in Vere-street,[8] Oxford-street. We stayed here some time. Then my chief went over to Paris, but he did not take all his servants with him. I stopped at the hotel to interpret for those who remained. It was during this time that I formed a connexion with a white woman. She was a servant in the hotel. I broke my caste,[9] and from that moment I knew that it would not do for me to go back to India. The girl fell in the family-way, and was sent out of the house. My fellow-servants knew of it, and as many of them hated me, I knew that they would tell my master on his return. I also knew that by the English laws in England I was a free man, and that my master could not take me back against my will. If I had gone back, I should have been put to death for breaking my caste. When my master returned from France, he sent for me. He told me that he had heard of my breaking my caste, and of the girl, but that he should take no notice of it; that I was to return to Calcutta with him, where he would get me employment with some European officer; that I need not fear, as he would order his servants to keep

silent on the subject. I salaamed and thanked him, and said I was his slave for ever; but at the same time I knew that he would break his word, and that when he had me in his power, he would put me to death. He was a very severe man about caste. I attended to all my duties as before, and all believed that I was going back to India —but the very morning that my master started for the coast, I ran away. I changed my clothes at the house of a girl I knew—not the same one as I had known at the hotel, but another. This one lived at Seven Dials.[1] I stopped in-doors for many days, till this girl, who could read newspapers, told me that my master had sailed away. I felt very glad, for though I knew my master could not force me to go back with him, yet I was afraid for all that, for he knew the King and the Queen, and had been invited by the Lord Mayor to the City. I liked England better than India, and English women have been very kind to me. I think English women are the handsomest in the world. The girl in whose house I hid, showed me how to beg. She persuaded me to turn Christian, because she thought that it would do me good—so I turned Christian. I do not know what it means, but I am a Christian, and have been for many years. I married that girl for some time. I have been married several times. I do not mean to say that I have ever been to church as rich folks do; but I have been married without that. Sometimes I do well, and sometimes badly. I often get a pound or two by interpreting. I am not at all afraid of meeting any Indian who knew me, for if they said anything I did not like, I should call out "Police!" I know the law better than I did. Every thing is free in England. You can do what you like, if you can pay, or are not found out. I do not like policemen. After the mutiny in 1857[2] I did very badly. No one would look at a poor Indian then—much less give to him. I knew that the English would put it down soon, because I know what those rascals over there are like. I am living now in Charles Street, Drury Lane.[3] I have been married to my present wife six years. We have three children and one dead. My eldest is now in the hospital with a bad arm. I swept a crossing for two years; that was just before the mutiny. All that knew me used to chaff me about it, and call me Johnny Sepoy. My present wife is

Irish, and fought two women about it. They were taken to Bowstreet[4] by a policeman, but the judge would not hear them. My wife is a very good wife to me, but she gets drunk too often. If it were not for that, I should like her better. I ran away from her once, but she came after me with all the children. Sometimes I make twelve shillings a week. I could make much more by interpreting, but I do not like to go among the nasty natives of my country. I believe I am more than fifty years of age."

Endnotes

- Note 1: Pamphlets on religious topics.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The highest caste in Hinduism.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Matches.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Strictly, person born within the sound of the bells of St. Mary-le-Bow Church in the city of London; more generally, a working-class Londoner.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A city in West Bengal.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Indian soldiers in the British army.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A city in the Indian state of Telangana.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: London streets known for prostitution and illegal trade.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Each caste was bound by a certain code of conduct; breaking those rules involved a loss of caste status.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A slum in London.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Indian uprising against the rule of the British East India Company.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Another slum.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Police headquarters.Return to reference 4

The negro beggar so nearly resembles the Hindoo that what I have said of one, I could almost say of the other. There are, however, these points of difference. The negro mendicant, who is usually an American negro, never studies the picturesque in his attire. He relies on the abject misery and down-trodden despair of his appearance, and generally represents himself as a fugitive slave—with this exception, his methods of levying contributions are precisely the same as his lighter-skinned brother's.

Some years ago it was a common thing to see a negro with tracts in his hand, and a placard upon his breast, upon which was a wood-cut of a black man, kneeling, his wrists heavily chained, his arms held high in supplication, and round the picture, forming a sort of proscenium or frame, the words: "Am I not a man and a brother?"[5] At the time that the suppression of the slave trade created so much excitement, this was so excellent a "dodge" that many white beggars, fortunate enough to possess a flattish or turned-up nose, *dyed themselves black* and "stood pad" as real Africans. The imposture, however, was soon detected and punished.

There are but few negro beggars to be seen now. It is only common fairness to say that negroes seldom, if ever, shirk work. Their only trouble is to obtain it. Those who have seen the many negroes employed in Liverpool, will know that they are hard-working, patient, and, too often, underpaid. A negro will sweep a crossing, run errands, black boots, clean knives and forks, or dig, for a crust and a few pence. The few impostors among them are to be found among those who go about giving lectures on the horrors of slavery, and singing variations on the "escapes" in that famous book 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.'[6] Negro servants are seldom read of in police reports, and are generally found to give satisfaction to their employers. In the east end of London negro beggars are to be met with, but they are seldom beggars by profession. Whenever they are

out of work they have no scruples, but go into the streets, take off their hats, and beg directly.

I was accosted by one in Whitechapel,[7] from whom I obtained the following statement:—

"My father was a slave, so was my mother. I have heard my father say so. I have heard them tell how they got away, but I forget all about it. It was before I was born. I am the eldest son. I had only one brother. Three years after his birth my mother died. My father was a shoe-black in New York. He very often had not enough to eat. My brother got a place as a servant, but I went out in the streets to do what I could. About the same time that my father, who was an old man, died, my brother lost his place. We agreed to come to England together. My brother had been living with some Britishers, and he had heard them say that over here n*****s were as good as whites; and that the whites did not look down on them and illtreat them, as they do in New York. We went about and got odd jobs on the quay, and at last we hid ourselves in the hold of a vessel, bound for Liverpool. I do not know how long we were hid, but I remember we were terribly frightened lest we should be found out before the ship got under weigh. At last hunger forced us out, and we rapped at the hatches; at first we were not heard, but when we shouted out, they opened the hatches, and took us on deck. They flogged us very severely, and treated us shamefully all the voyage. When we got to Liverpool, we begged and got odd jobs. At last we got engaged in a travelling circus, where we were servants, and used to ride about with the band in beautiful dresses, but the grooms treated us so cruelly that we were forced to run away from that. I forget the name of the place that we were performing at, but it was not a day's walk from London. We begged about for some time. At last, my brother—his name is Aaron—got to clean the knives and forks at a slap-bang (an eating-house) in the city. He was very fortunate, and used to save some bits for me. He never takes any notice of me now. He is doing very well. He lives with a great gentleman in Harewood-square,[8] and has a coat with silver buttons, and a gold-laced hat. He is very proud, and I do not think would

speak to me if he saw me. I don't know how I live, or how much I get a week. I do porter's work mostly, but I do anything I can get. I beg more than half the year. I have no regular lodging. I sleep where I can. When I am in luck, I have a bed. It costs me threepence. At some places they don't care to take a man of colour in. I sometimes get work in Newgate-market,[9] carrying meat, but not often. Ladies give me halfpence oftener than men. The butchers call me 'Othello,'[1] and ask me why I killed my wife. I have tried to get aboard a ship, but they won't have me. I don't know how old I am, but I know that when we got to London, it was the time the Great Exhibition[2] was about. I can lift almost any weight when I have had a bit of something to eat. I don't care for beer. I like rum best. I have often got drunk, but never when I paid for it myself."

1851, 1861–62

Endnotes

- Note 5: The motto emblazoned on a medallion made in 1787 by Josiah Wedgwood to raise money for the abolition of slavery; the medallion features an image of a Black man in chains on his knees and became one of the most famous images of the abolitionist cause.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1851–52 novel; a short excerpt from the novel is reprinted in this volume on pp. 50–52.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A slum largely populated by Irish and Jewish immigrants.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A wealthy part of London.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A market specializing in meat.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Othello: tragic hero of Shakespeare's play of that name.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: International exhibition of 1851 that displayed industrial works from all over the world.Return to reference 2

CHARLES DICKENS
1812–1870

Charles Dickens was Victorian England's most beloved and distinctive novelist. In the words of the eulogy that the classicist Benjamin Jowett spoke at his funeral service, Dickens "occupied a greater space than any other writer during the last thirty-five years. We read him, talked about him, acted him; we laughed with him, we were roused by him to a consciousness of the misery of others, and to a pathetic [that is, emotional] interest in human life."

Dickens was born the second of eight children in the coastal town of Portsmouth in southern England. His father, a clerk in the Naval Pay Office, found it difficult to keep his family out of debt. Plagued by financial insecurity, the family moved from place to place, to increasingly poorer lodgings, finally ending up in London. In an effort to help the family, a friend of his father's offered Charles a job at a blacking warehouse, an enterprise that produced shoe polish. Two days before his twelfth birthday, Charles began work, labeling bottles for six shillings a week. Two weeks later his father was arrested and sent to the Marshalsea Prison for debt. His family went to live in prison with him, as was the custom; they decided that Charles should remain outside, continuing to work and living with a woman who took in young lodgers.

Some thirty-five years after this period, Dickens told his friend and eventual biographer John Forster that the recollection of these times "haunted him and made him miserable, even to that hour." He

began to compose an autobiographical account for Forster but soon abandoned it to write instead his most personal novel, *David Copperfield*, in which the titular character undergoes a similar class fall into menial employment at the age of twelve. It has long been a scholarly and popular commonplace that this early experience constituted a trauma that accounts for the emotional concerns of Dickens's fiction, particularly its pronounced sympathy for the figure of the abused or abandoned child.

Dickens's father was able to leave debtors' prison after three months, upon receipt of a legacy from his mother. He removed Charles from the factory and sent him to school. At fifteen Dickens began work as a junior clerk at a law office; eighteen months later he became a freelance journalist, reporting court proceedings and then debates in the House of Commons. Reporting led him to other kinds of writing. He began publishing literary sketches, at first anonymously and then under the pseudonym "Boz." In 1836, on his twenty-fourth birthday, he published the collection *Sketches by Boz*. The success of the volume led to a commission from the publishers Chapman & Hall to provide amusing text to accompany serial installments of a set of illustrations of hunting, shooting, and sporting scenes. The result, *Pickwick Papers* (1836–37), brought Dickens fame and prosperity. This picaresque novel, relating the adventures of Mr. Pickwick and his friends as they travel around England, set the pattern of illustrated serial publication that was to define Dickens's writing career and to shape the reading habits of his generation. Families would wait in suspense for the next installment of a novel to be issued, which they would read aloud as an evening's entertainment. Successes followed quickly: *Oliver Twist* (1838), *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838–39), and *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840–41).

Through the 1840s and 1850s Dickens continued to write novels at an intense pace, producing *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843–44), *Dombey and Son* (1846–48), *David Copperfield* (1849–50), *Bleak House* (1852–53), *Hard Times* (1854), *Little Dorrit* (1855–57), and *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859). He also became deeply involved in a number of other activities, including

traveling, working for charities, and acting. During this time, he founded and edited the weekly magazine *Household Words* (incorporated in 1859 into *All the Year Round*), which published fiction by Elizabeth Gaskell, Wilkie Collins, Dickens himself, and other novelists as well as opinion pieces about political and social issues. He also began a series of Christmas books, the first of which was the phenomenally successful tale, *A Christmas Carol* (1843). Almost as beloved as the text are its illustrations: *A Christmas Carol* featured four hand-colored etchings and four black-and-white engravings by the artist John Leech. All eight are included in the text below.

By the time of *Pickwick*'s completion, Dickens had married Catherine Hogarth, the daughter of a fellow journalist, and had begun a family; they eventually had ten children. Dickens left his wife in 1858, claiming frustration with the chaos of domestic life. In truth Dickens was secretly involved with Ellen Ternan, an actress some twenty-seven years his junior. Ostensibly alone, he took up residence at Gad's Hill, a gentleman's house in Kent. Dickens now abandoned amateur theatricals to embark on a series of lucrative professional readings, which were so emotionally and physically exhausting his doctor finally instructed him to stop. He slowed the pace of his writing, publishing only two novels in the 1860s: *Great Expectations* (1860–61) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–65). He died suddenly in 1870, leaving his last novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870), unfinished.

The popularity of Dickens's writings with general readers coupled with their many film and television adaptations has given his work a broad and continuous cultural afterlife. Back in 1870, fellow novelist Anthony Trollope observed that no other writer except Shakespeare has left so many "characters which are known by their names familiarly as household words, and which bring to our minds vividly and at once, a certain well-understood set of ideas, habits, phrases and costumes, making together a man, or woman, or child, whom we know at a glance and recognize at a sound, as we do our own intimate friends." But the scale of Dickens's achievement is by no means limited to his ability to construct memorably distinctive

human beings. A master-plotter, a writer of extraordinarily evocative prose, and a keen observer of his developing country, he also created fictions shot through with fierce social criticism; as the playwright George Bernard Shaw wrote in 1937, "Dickens never regarded himself as a revolutionist, though he certainly was one." Dickens's early novels often concern specific abuses—the workhouses in which pauper children were confined in *Oliver Twist*, abusive and fraudulent schools in *Nicholas Nickleby*—but, as his career progressed, he felt an increasing urgency to mount a broader attack, demonstrating how the acts of powerful institutions and individuals alike belied the tenets of the compassionate religion they claimed to embrace.

Dickens regarded fiction as a way to develop sympathy and so counteract the uncaring tendencies of an inequitable era. While other reformers sought institutional change—legislative and policy changes intended to protect workers, children, married women, consumers, the destitute—Dickens believed that any such changes would be meaningless in the absence of a widespread change of heart. In a famous passage from *Dombey and Son*, the narrator laments:

> Oh for a good spirit who would take the house-tops off, with a more potent and benignant hand than the lame demon in the tale, and show a Christian people what dark shapes issue from amidst their homes, to swell the retinue of the Destroying Angel as he moves forth among them! For only one night's view of the pale phantoms rising from the scenes of our too-long neglect; and, from the thick and sullen air where Vice and Fever propagate together, raining the tremendous social retributions which are ever pouring down, and ever coming thicker! Bright and blest the morning that should rise on such a night: for men, delayed no more by stumbling-blocks of their own making, which are but specks of dust upon the path between them and eternity, would then apply themselves, like creatures of one common origin,

owning one duty to the Father of one family, and tending to one common end, to make the world a better place!

As many critics have noted, the novelist's is the hand that takes the house-tops off and allows his readers to understand people different from themselves. Dickens saw such understanding as a necessary prerequisite for social change.

A Christmas Carol It seems likely that no work in this volume has been read, adapted, performed, and parodied more than *A Christmas Carol*. Even aside from the story itself with its instantly recognizable taglines ("Bah, Humbug!"), memorable characters (Tiny Tim and Bob Cratchit, and the three spirits), and conversion narrative, *A Christmas Carol* has been credited with effectively creating Christmas as we now know it. Many historians claim that prior to the mid-nineteenth century, Christmas was just one holiday among many. After Dickens was done with it, it had been transformed into a focus of national pride, massive consumerism, and an occasion for good works. The rituals around turkey, plum pudding, crackers, games, and large quantities of presents were all nineteenth-century innovations. It is also worth noting how much certain deeply British traditions were bound up with Empire: after all, without imported brandy, dried fruit, spices, and sugar, all that is left of plum pudding is the flour, eggs, and suet.



Mr. Fezziwig's Ball

A Christmas Carol

Stave[1] *One*

MARLEY'S GHOST

Marley was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it: and Scrooge's name was good upon 'Change,[2] for anything he chose to put his hand to. Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Mind! I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail as the deadest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it, or the Country's done for. You will therefore permit me to repeat, emphatically, that Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend, and sole mourner. And even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event, but that he was an excellent man of business on the very day of the funeral, and solemnised it with an undoubted bargain.

The mention of Marley's funeral brings me back to the point I started from. There is no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate. If we were not perfectly convinced that Hamlet's Father died before the play began, there would be nothing more remarkable in his taking a stroll at night, in an easterly wind, upon his own ramparts, than there would be in any other middle-aged gentleman rashly turning out after dark in a breezy spot—say Saint

Paul's Churchyard for instance—literally to astonish his son's weak mind.

Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley. The firm was known as Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, but he answered to both names. It was all the same to him.

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days;[3] and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, nor wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. The heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet, could boast of the advantage over him in only one respect. They often "came down" handsomely, and Scrooge never did.

Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks, "My dear Scrooge, how are you? when will you come to see me?" No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what it was o'clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge. Even the blindmen's dogs appeared to know him; and when they saw him coming on, would tug their owners into doorways and up courts; and then would wag their tails as though they said, "no eye at all is better than an evil eye, dark master!"

But what did Scrooge care! It was the very thing he liked. To edge his way along the crowded paths of life, warning all human

sympathy to keep its distance, was what the knowing ones call "nuts" to Scrooge.[4]

Once upon a time—of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve—old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather: foggy withal: and he could hear the people in the court outside go wheezing up and down, beating their hands upon their breasts, and stamping their feet upon the pavement-stones to warm them. The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already: it had not been light all day: and candles were flaring in the windows of the neighbouring offices, like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air. The fog came pouring in at every chink and keyhole, and was so dense without, that although the court was of the narrowest, the houses opposite were mere phantoms. To see the dingy cloud come drooping down, obscuring everything, one might have thought that Nature lived hard by, and was brewing on a large scale.

The door of Scrooge's counting-house was open that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, who in a dismal little cell beyond, a sort of tank, was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one coal. But he couldn't replenish it, for Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room; and so surely as the clerk came in with the shovel, the master predicted that it would be necessary for them to part. Wherefore the clerk put on his white comforter, and tried to warm himself at the candle; in which effort, not being a man of a strong imagination, he failed.

"A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!" cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew, who came upon him so quickly that this was the first intimation he had of his approach.

"Bah!" said Scrooge, "Humbug!"[5]

He had so heated himself with rapid walking in the fog and frost, this nephew of Scrooge's, that he was all in a glow; his face was ruddy and handsome; his eyes sparkled, and his breath smoked again.

"Christmas a humbug, uncle!" said Scrooge's nephew. "You don't mean that, I am sure."

"I do," said Scrooge. "Merry Christmas! what right have you to be merry? what reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough."

"Come, then," returned the nephew gaily. "What right have you to be dismal? what reason have you to be morose? You're rich enough."

Scrooge having no better answer ready on the spur of the moment, said, "Bah!" again; and followed it up with "Humbug."

"Don't be cross, uncle," said the nephew.

"What else can I be" returned the uncle, "when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas! Out upon merry Christmas! What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, and not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and having every item in 'em through a round dozen of months presented dead against you? If I could work my will," said Scrooge, indignantly, "every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas,' on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!"

"Uncle!" pleaded the nephew.

"Nephew!" returned the uncle, sternly, "keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine."

"Keep it!" repeated Scrooge's nephew. "But you don't keep it."

"Let me leave it alone, then," said Scrooge. "Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!"

"There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited, I dare say," returned the nephew: "Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round—apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it can be apart from that—as a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of

creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it *has* done me good, and *will* do me good; and I say, God bless it!"

The clerk in the tank involuntarily applauded: becoming immediately sensible of the impropriety, he poked the fire, and extinguished the last frail spark for ever.

"Let me hear another sound from *you*" said Scrooge, "and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation. You're quite a powerful speaker, sir," he added, turning to his nephew. "I wonder you don't go into Parliament."

"Don't be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us to-morrow."

Scrooge said that he would see him—yes, indeed he did. He went the whole length of the expression, and said that he would see him in that extremity first.[6]

"But why?" cried Scrooge's nephew. "Why?"

"Why did you get married?" said Scrooge.

"Because I fell in love."

"Because you fell in love!" growled Scrooge, as if that were the only one thing in the world more ridiculous than a merry Christmas. "Good afternoon!"

"Nay, uncle, but you never came to see me before that happened. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?"

"Good afternoon," said Scrooge.

"I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you; why cannot we be friends?"

"Good afternoon," said Scrooge.

"I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you so resolute. We have never had any quarrel, to which I have been a party. But I have made the trial in homage to Christmas, and I'll keep my Christmas humour to the last. So A Merry Christmas, uncle!"

"Good afternoon!" said Scrooge.

"And A Happy New Year!"

"Good afternoon!" said Scrooge.

His nephew left the room without an angry word, notwithstanding. He stopped at the outer door to bestow the greetings of the season on the clerk, who, cold as he was, was warmer than Scrooge; for he returned them cordially.

"There's another fellow," muttered Scrooge; who overheard him: "my clerk, with fifteen shillings a-week, and a wife and family, talking about a merry Christmas. I'll retire to Bedlam."[7]

This lunatic, in letting Scrooge's nephew out, had let two other people in. They were portly gentlemen, pleasant to behold, and now stood, with their hats off, in Scrooge's office. They had books and papers in their hands, and bowed to him.

"Scrooge and Marley's, I believe," said one of the gentlemen, referring to his list. "Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?"

"Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years," Scrooge replied. "He died seven years ago, this very night."

"We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner," said the gentleman, presenting his credentials.

It certainly was; for they had been two kindred spirits. At the ominous word "liberality," Scrooge frowned, and shook his head, and handed the credentials back.

"At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge," said the gentleman, taking up a pen, "it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the Poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessaries; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir."

"Are there no prisons?" asked Scrooge.

"Plenty of prisons," said the gentleman, laying down the pen again.

"And the Union workhouses?" demanded Scrooge. "Are they still in operation?"

"They are. Still," returned the gentleman, "I wish I could say they were not."

"The Treadmill and the Poor Law[8] are in full vigour, then?" said Scrooge.

"Both very busy, sir."

"Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course," said Scrooge. "I'm very glad to hear it."

"Under the impression that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body to the multitude," returned the gentleman, "a few of us are endeavouring to raise a fund to buy the Poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. We choose this time, because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices. What shall I put you down for?"

"Nothing!" Scrooge replied.

"You wish to be anonymous?"

"I wish to be left alone," said Scrooge. "Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned: they cost enough: and those who are badly off must go there."

"Many can't go there; and many would rather die."

"If they would rather die," said Scrooge, "they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.[9] Besides—excuse me—I don't know that."

"But you might know it," observed the gentleman.

"It's not my business," Scrooge returned. "It's enough for a man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people's. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon, gentlemen!"

Seeing clearly that it would be useless to pursue their point, the gentlemen withdrew. Scrooge resumed his labours with an improved opinion of himself, and in a more facetious temper than was usual with him.

Meanwhile the fog and darkness thickened so, that people ran about with flaring links,[1] proffering their services to go before horses in carriages, and conduct them on their way. The ancient tower of a

church, whose gruff old bell was always peeping slily down at Scrooge out of a gothic window in the wall, became invisible, and struck the hours and quarters in the clouds, with tremulous vibrations afterwards, as if its teeth were chattering in its frozen head up there. The cold became intense. In the main street, at the corner of the court, some labourers were repairing the gas-pipes, and had lighted a great fire in a brazier, round which a party of ragged men and boys were gathered: warming their hands and winking their eyes before the blaze in rapture. The water-plug[2] being left in solitude, its overflowing sullenly congealed, and turned to misanthropic ice. The brightness of the shops where holly sprigs and berries crackled in the lamp-heat of the windows, made pale faces ruddy as they passed. Poulterers' and grocers' trades became a splendid joke: a glorious pageant, with which it was next to impossible to believe that such dull principles as bargain and sale had anything to do. The Lord Mayor, in the stronghold of the mighty Mansion House,[3] gave orders to his fifty cooks and butlers to keep Christmas as a Lord Mayor's household should; and even the little tailor, whom he had fined five shillings on the previous Monday for being drunk and blood-thirsty in the streets, stirred up to-morrow's pudding in his garret, while his lean wife and the baby sallied out to buy the beef.

Foggier yet, and colder! Piercing, searching, biting cold. If the good Saint Dunstan had but nipped the Evil Spirit's nose with a touch of such weather as that, instead of using his familiar weapons,[4] then indeed he would have roared to lusty purpose. The owner of one scant young nose, gnawed and mumbled by the hungry cold as bones are gnawed by dogs, stooped down at Scrooge's keyhole to regale him with a Christmas carol: but at the first sound of

> "God bless you merry gentleman!
> May nothing you dismay!"

Scrooge seized the ruler with such energy of action, that the singer fled in terror, leaving the keyhole to the fog and even more congenial frost.

At length the hour of shutting up the counting-house arrived. With an ill-will Scrooge dismounted from his stool, and tacitly admitted the fact to the expectant clerk in the Tank, who instantly snuffed his candle out, and put on his hat.

"You'll want all day to-morrow, I suppose?' said Scrooge.

"If quite convenient, Sir."

"It's not convenient," said Scrooge, "and it's not fair. If I was to stop half-a-crown for it,[5] you'd think yourself ill used, I'll be bound?"

The clerk smiled faintly.

"And yet," said Scrooge, "you don't think *me* ill-used, when I pay a day's wages for no work."

The clerk observed that it was only once a year.

"A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December!" said Scrooge, buttoning his great-coat to the chin. "But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier next morning!"

The clerk promised that he would; and Scrooge walked out with a growl. The office was closed in a twinkling, and the clerk, with the long ends of his white comforter dangling below his waist (for he boasted no great-coat), went down a slide on Cornhill, at the end of a lane of boys, twenty times, in honour of its being Christmas-eve, and then ran home to Camden Town as hard as he could pelt, to play at blindman's-buff.[6]

Scrooge took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern; and having read all the newspapers, and beguiled the rest of the evening with his banker's-book, went home to bed. He lived in chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner. They were a gloomy suite of rooms, in a lowering pile of building up a yard, where it had so little business to be, that one could scarcely help fancying it must have run there when it was a young house, playing at hide-and-seek with other houses, and have forgotten the way out again. It was old enough now, and dreary enough, for nobody lived in it but Scrooge, the other rooms being all let out as offices. The yard was so dark that even Scrooge, who knew its every stone, was fain to grope with his hands. The fog and frost so hung

about the black old gateway of the house, that it seemed as if the Genius of the Weather sat in mournful meditation on the threshold.

Now, it is a fact, that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door, except that it was very large. It is also a fact, that Scrooge had seen it night and morning during his whole residence in that place; also that Scrooge had as little of what is called fancy about him as any man in the City of London, even including—which is a bold word—the corporation, aldermen, and livery.[7] Let it also be borne in mind that Scrooge had not bestowed one thought on Marley, since his last mention of his seven-years' dead partner that afternoon. And then let any man explain to me, if he can, how it happened that Scrooge, having his key in the lock of the door, saw in the knocker, without its undergoing any intermediate process of change: not a knocker, but Marley's face.

Marley's face. It was not in impenetrable shadow as the other objects in the yard were, but had a dismal light about it, like a bad lobster in a dark cellar.[8] It was not angry or ferocious, but looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look: with ghostly spectacles turned up upon its ghostly forehead. The hair was curiously stirred, as if by breath or hot-air; and though the eyes were wide open, they were perfectly motionless. That, and its livid colour, made it horrible; but its horror seemed to be, in spite of the face and beyond its control, rather than a part of its own expression.

As Scrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenon, it was a knocker again.

To say that he was not startled, or that his blood was not conscious of a terrible sensation to which it had been a stranger from infancy, would be untrue. But he put his hand upon the key he had relinquished, turned it sturdily, walked in, and lighted his candle.

He *did* pause, with a moment's irresolution, before he shut the door; and he *did* look cautiously behind it first, as if he half-expected to be terrified with the sight of Marley's pigtail sticking out into the hall. But there was nothing on the back of the door, except the screws and nuts that held the knocker on; so he said "Pooh, pooh!" and closed it with a bang.

The sound resounded through the house like thunder. Every room above, and every cask in the wine-merchant's cellars below, appeared to have a separate peal of echoes of its own. Scrooge was not a man to be frightened by echoes. He fastened the door, and walked across the hall, and up the stairs: slowly too: trimming his candle[9] as he went.

You may talk vaguely about driving a coach-and-six up a good old flight of stairs, or through a bad young Act of Parliament;[1] but I mean to say you might have got a hearse up that staircase, and taken it broadwise, with the splinter-bar[2] towards the wall, and the door towards the balustrades: and done it easy. There was plenty of width for that, and room to spare; which is perhaps the reason why Scrooge thought he saw a locomotive hearse going on before him in the gloom. Half a dozen gas-lamps out of the street wouldn't have lighted the entry too well, so you may suppose that it was pretty dark with Scrooge's dip.

Up Scrooge went, not caring a button for that: darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked it. But before he shut his heavy door, he walked through his rooms to see that all was right. He had just enough recollection of the face to desire to do that.

Sitting-room, bed-room, lumber-room.[3] All as they should be. Nobody under the table, nobody under the sofa; a small fire in the grate; spoon and basin ready; and the little saucepan of gruel (Scrooge had a cold in his head) upon the hob. Nobody under the bed; nobody in the closet; nobody in his dressing-gown, which was hanging up in a suspicious attitude against the wall. Lumber-room as usual. Old fire-guard, old shoes, two fish-baskets, washing-stand on three legs, and a poker.

Quite satisfied, he closed his door, and locked himself in; double-locked himself in, which was not his custom. Thus secured against surprise, he took off his cravat; put on his dressing-gown and slippers, and his night-cap; and sat down before the fire to take his gruel.

It was a very low fire indeed; nothing on such a bitter night. He was obliged to sit close to it, and brood over it, before he could

extract the least sensation of warmth from such a handful of fuel. The fire-place was an old one, built by some Dutch merchant long ago, and paved all round with quaint Dutch tiles, designed to illustrate the Scriptures. There were Cains and Abels; Pharaoh's daughters, Queens of Sheba, Angelic messengers descending through the air on clouds like feather-beds, Abrahams, Belshazzars, Apostles putting off to sea in butter-boats, hundreds of figures, to attract his thoughts; and yet that face of Marley, seven years dead, came like the ancient Prophet's rod,[4] and swallowed up the whole. If each smooth tile had been a blank at first, with power to shape some picture on its surface from the disjointed fragments of his thoughts, there would have been a copy of old Marley's head on every one.

"Humbug!" said Scrooge; and walked across the room.

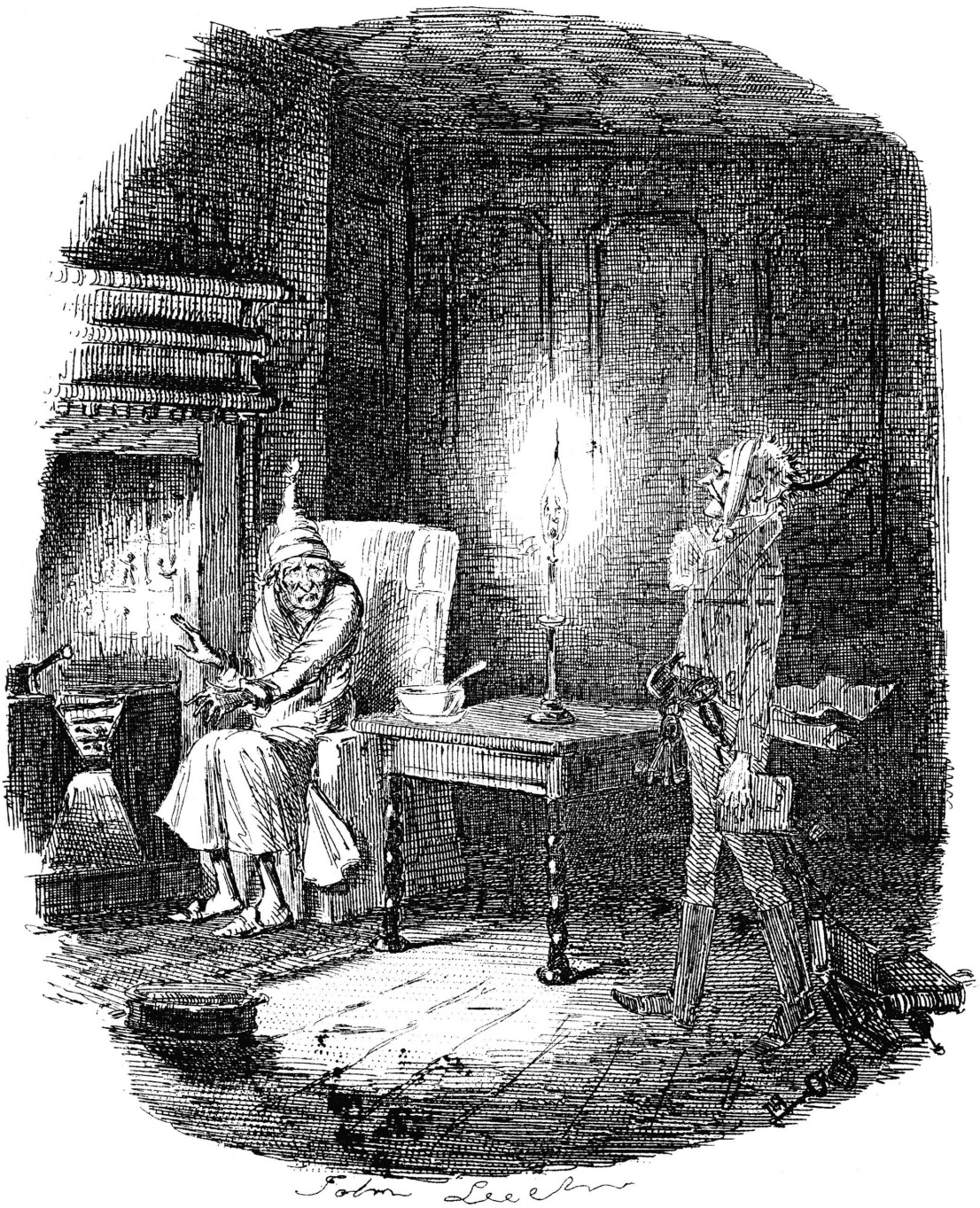
After several turns, he sat down again. As he threw his head back in the chair, his glance happened to rest upon a bell, a disused bell, that hung in the room, and communicated for some purpose now forgotten with a chamber in the highest story of the building. It was with great astonishment, and with a strange, inexplicable dread, that as he looked, he saw this bell begin to swing. It swung so softly in the outset that it scarcely made a sound; but soon it rang out loudly, and so did every bell in the house.

This might have lasted half a minute, or a minute, but it seemed an hour. The bells ceased as they had begun, together. They were succeeded by a clanking noise, deep down below; as if some person were dragging a heavy chain over the casks in the wine-merchant's cellar. Scrooge then remembered to have heard that ghosts in haunted houses were described as dragging chains.

The cellar-door flew open with a booming sound, and then he heard the noise much louder, on the floors below; then coming up the stairs; then coming straight towards his door.

"It's humbug still!" said Scrooge. "I won't believe it."

His colour changed though, when, without a pause, it came on through the heavy door, and passed into the room before his eyes. Upon its coming in, the dying flame leaped up, as though it cried "I know him! Marley's Ghost!" and fell again.



Marley's Ghost

The same face: the very same. Marley in his pig-tail, usual waistcoat, tights,[5] and boots; the tassels on the latter bristling, like

his pigtail, and his coat-skirts, and the hair upon his head. The chain he drew was clasped about his middle. It was long, and wound about him like a tail; and it was made (for Scrooge observed it closely) of cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel. His body was transparent: so that Scrooge, observing him, and looking through his waistcoat, could see the two buttons on his coat behind.

Scrooge had often heard it said that Marley had no bowels, but he had never believed it until now.[6]

No, nor did he believe it even now. Though he looked the phantom through and through, and saw it standing before him; though he felt the chilling influence of its death-cold eyes; and marked the very texture of the folded kerchief bound about its head and chin, which wrapper he had not observed before; he was still incredulous, and fought against his senses.

"How now!" said Scrooge, caustic and cold as ever. "What do you want with me?"

"Much!"—Marley's voice, no doubt about it.

"Who are you?"

"Ask me who I *was*."

"Who *were* you then?" said Scrooge, raising his voice. "You're particular—for a shade." He was going to say "*to* a shade,"[7] but substituted this, as more appropriate.

"In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley."

"Can you—can you sit down?" asked Scrooge, looking doubtfully at him.

"I can."

"Do it then."

Scrooge asked the question, because he didn't know whether a ghost so transparent might find himself in a condition to take a chair; and felt that in the event of its being impossible, it might involve the necessity of an embarrassing explanation. But the ghost sat down on the opposite side of the fireplace, as if he were quite used to it.

"You don't believe in me," observed the Ghost.

"I don't," said Scrooge.

"What evidence would you have of my reality, beyond that of your senses?"

"I don't know," said Scrooge.

"Why do you doubt your senses?"

"Because," said Scrooge, "a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!"

Scrooge was not much in the habit of cracking jokes, nor did he feel, in his heart, by any means waggish then. The truth is, that he tried to be smart, as a means of distracting his own attention, and keeping down his terror; for the spectre's voice disturbed the very marrow in his bones.

To sit, staring at those fixed, glazed eyes, in silence for a moment, would play, Scrooge felt, the very deuce with him. There was something very awful, too, in the spectre's being provided with an infernal atmosphere of its own. Scrooge could not feel it himself, but this was clearly the case; for though the Ghost sat perfectly motionless, its hair, and skirts, and tassels, were still agitated as by the hot vapour from an oven.

"You see this toothpick?" said Scrooge, returning quickly to the charge, for the reason just assigned; and wishing, though it were only for a second, to divert the vision's stony gaze from himself.

"I do," replied the Ghost.

"You are not looking at it," said Scrooge.

"But I see it," said the Ghost, "notwithstanding."

"Well!" returned Scrooge. "I have but to swallow this, and be for the rest of my days persecuted by a legion of goblins, all of my own creation. Humbug, I tell you; humbug!"

At this, the spirit raised a frightful cry, and shook its chain with such a dismal and appalling noise, that Scrooge held on tight to his chair, to save himself from falling in a swoon. But how much greater was his horror, when the phantom taking off the bandage round its

head, as if it were too warm to wear in-doors, its lower jaw dropped down upon its breast!

Scrooge fell upon his knees, and clasped his hands before his face.

"Mercy!" he said. "Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?"

"Man of the worldly mind!" replied the Ghost, "do you believe in me or not?"

"I do," said Scrooge. "I must. But why do spirits walk the earth, and why do they come to me?"

"It is required of every man," the Ghost returned, "that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow-men, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander through the world—oh, woe is me!—and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness!"

Again the spectre raised a cry, and shook its chain, and wrung its shadowy hands.

"You are fettered," said Scrooge, trembling. "Tell me why?"

"I wear the chain I forged in life," replied the Ghost. "I made it link by link, and yard by yard, I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its pattern strange to *you?*"

Scrooge trembled more and more.

"Or would you know," pursued the Ghost, "the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It was full as heavy and as long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have laboured on it, since. It is a ponderous chain!"

Scrooge glanced about him on the floor, in the expectation of finding himself surrounded by some fifty or sixty fathoms of iron cable: but he could see nothing.

"Jacob," he said, imploringly. "Old Jacob Marley, tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob."

"I have none to give," the Ghost replied. "It comes from other regions, Ebenezer Scrooge, and is conveyed by other ministers, to other kinds of men. Nor can I tell you what I would. A very little more, is all permitted to me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot

linger anywhere. My spirit never walked beyond our counting-house —mark me!—in life my spirit never loved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole; and weary journeys lie before me!”

It was a habit with Scrooge, whenever he became thoughtful, to put his hands in his breeches pockets. Pondering on what the Ghost had said, he did so now, but without lifting up his eyes, or getting off his knees.

“You must have been very slow about it, Jacob,” Scrooge observed, in a business-like manner, though with humility and deference.

“Slow!” the Ghost repeated.

“Seven years dead,” mused Scrooge. “And travelling all the time?”

“The whole time,” said the Ghost. “No rest, no peace. Incessant torture of remorse.”

“You travel fast?” said Scrooge.

“On the wings of the wind,” replied the Ghost.

“You might have got over a great quantity of ground in seven years,” said Scrooge.

The Ghost, on hearing this, set up another cry, and clanked its chain so hideously in the dead silence of the night, that the Ward[8] would have been justified in indicting it for a nuisance.

“Oh! captive, bound, and double-ironed,” cried the phantom, “not to know, that ages of incessant labour by immortal creatures, for this earth must pass into eternity before the good of which it is susceptible is all developed. Not to know that any Christian spirit working kindly in its little sphere, whatever it may be, will find its mortal life too short for its vast means of usefulness. Not to know that no space of regret can make amends for one life’s opportunities misused! Yet such was I! Oh! Such was I!”

“But you were always a good man of business, Jacob,” faultered Scrooge, who now began to apply this to himself.

“Business!” cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. “Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business. The

dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!"

It held up its chain at arm's length, as if that were the cause of all its unavailing grief, and flung it heavily upon the ground again.

"At this time of the rolling year," the spectre said, "I suffer most. Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed Star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode?[9] Were there no poor homes to which its light would have conducted *me!*"

Scrooge was very much dismayed to hear the spectre going on at this rate, and began to quake exceedingly.

"Hear me!" cried the Ghost. "My time is nearly gone."

"I will," said Scrooge. "But don't be hard upon me! Don't be flowery, Jacob! Pray!"

"How it is that I appear before you in a shape that you can see, I may not tell. I have sat invisible beside you many and many a day."

It was not an agreeable idea. Scrooge shivered, and wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"That is no light part of my penance," pursued the Ghost. "I am here to-night to warn you, that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. A chance and hope of my procuring, Ebenezer."

"You were always a good friend to me," said Scrooge. "Thank'ee!"

"You will be haunted," resumed the Ghost, "by Three Spirits."

Scrooge's countenance fell almost as low as the Ghost's had done.

"Is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob?" he demanded, in a faultering voice.

"It is."

"I—I think I'd rather not," said Scrooge.

"Without their visits," said the Ghost, "you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first to-morrow, when the bell tolls One."

"Couldn't I take'em all at once, and have it over, Jacob?" hinted Scrooge.

"Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third upon the next night when the last stroke of Twelve has ceased to vibrate. Look to see me no more; and look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us!"

When it had said these words, the spectre took its wrapper from the table, and bound it round its head, as before. Scrooge knew this, by the smart sound its teeth made, when the jaws were brought together by the bandage. He ventured to raise his eyes again, and found his supernatural visitor confronting him in an erect attitude, with its chain wound over and about its arm.

The apparition walked backward from him; and at every step it took, the window raised itself a little, so that when the spectre reached it, it was wide open. It beckoned Scrooge to approach, which he did. When they were within two paces of each other, Marley's Ghost held up its hand, warning him to come no nearer. Scrooge stopped.

Not so much in obedience, as in surprise and fear: for on the raising of the hand, he became sensible of confused noises in the air; incoherent sounds of lamentation and regret; wailings inexpressibly sorrowful and self-accusatory. The spectre, after listening for a moment, joined in the mournful dirge; and floated out upon the bleak, dark night.

Scrooge followed to the window: desperate in his curiosity. He looked out.

The air was filled with phantoms, wandering hither and thither in restless haste, and moaning as they went. Every one of them wore chains like Marley's Ghost; some few (they might be guilty governments) were linked together; none were free. Many had been personally known to Scrooge in their lives. He had been quite familiar with one old ghost, in a white waistcoat, with a monstrous iron safe attached to its ancle, who cried piteously at being unable to assist a wretched woman with an infant, whom it saw below, upon a door-step. The misery with them all was, clearly, that they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power for ever.

Whether these creatures faded into mist, or mist enshrouded them, he could not tell. But they and their spirit voices faded together; and the night became as it had been when he walked home.

Scrooge closed the window, and examined the door by which the Ghost had entered. It was double-locked, as he had locked it with his own hands, and the bolts were undisturbed. He tried to say "Humbug!" but stopped at the first syllable. And being, from the emotion he had undergone, or the fatigues of the day, or his glimpse of the Invisible World, or the dull conversation of the Ghost, or the lateness of the hour, much in need of repose; went straight to bed, without undressing, and fell asleep upon the instant.



Endnotes

- Note 1: Staff (archaic); a stanza of a song or poem. This term extends the idea that the story is a Christmas carol in prose. The illustration on page 349, of Mr. Fezziwig's Ball, appeared as the volume's frontispiece when the story was first published.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, Scrooge had good credit at the Royal Exchange, the center of London's financial world.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: From July 3 to August 11, often the hottest days of the year, when the Dog Star, Sirius, rises and sets with the sun.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Agreeable or pleasing to Scrooge (slang).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Deceptive, or hypocritical, talk or behavior (slang).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, Scrooge said he would see him damned or in hell.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, Bethlehem; Bedlam is the shortened name of the country's most famous asylum for the insane, London's Hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem. The term became a synonym for *madhouse*.Return to reference 7
- Note 8:
  Funded by local taxation and intended to give financial and material help to those unable to provide for themselves, first instituted in the 16th century. A supposedly rationalizing and cost-cutting Poor Law Amendment Act (known as the "New Poor Law") had been passed in 1834; Dickens wrote *Oliver Twist* (1837) in part as a protest against the severity of some of its measures. Foremost among these was the replacement of parish "outrelief" (assistance from the local administrative district that had allowed the needy to continue living in their own homes) by "Union workhouses": applicants for help now had to move into large centralized institutions run by newly created unions of parishes. "Treadmill": a method of criminal punishment, first

introduced in London's Brixton Prison in 1821, in which prisoners were forced to walk on the steps of a large revolving wheel to power a grain mill.
Return to reference 8

- Note 9: A reference to the famous *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1803) by the political economist Thomas Robert Malthus (1766–1834), which predicts that population, if left unchecked, increases more rapidly than the supply of food.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Torches made of cloth dipped in tar. The fog described here was a by-product of burning coal for heat and industry.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Fire hydrant.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The official residence of the Lord Mayor in the City, London's commercial and financial district.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: According to legend, the devil once leaned through Dunstan's workshop window to try to tempt him away from his labor. Dunstan, patron saint of armor makers, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, locksmiths, and musicians, responded by seizing the devil's nose with red-hot pincers.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Two shillings and sixpence, one sixth of Cratchit's weekly salary.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A popular parlor game, in which one person is blindfolded and then must catch another player and guess whom he or she has caught. Cornhill is a major street in the City. Camden Town is a district in inner northeast London.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The administrative body ("corporation") of the City of London consisted at that time of the mayor; twenty-six "aldermen," each representing a ward or district; and 206 councilmen; all of whom were required to belong to one of London's professional guilds or companies, many of which had special clothing ("livery") that members were entitled to wear.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Some rotting seafood is known to glow in the dark thanks to a phenomenon called "bacterial

bioluminescence."Return to reference 8

- Note 9: Scrooge is carrying a dip, a length of wick dipped several times in melted animal fat. Cheaper than wax candles, they had to be repeatedly "trimmed" to stop the burned section from dropping to the ground.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The Irish political leader Daniel O'Connell (1775–1847) apparently used to boast that he could drive a coach and six horses through English laws because they were so loosely worded.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The crossbar at the front of a coach, supporting the springs.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Storage room for unused furniture.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Aaron's staff, transformed into a snake by God, swallows up all of the Egyptians' rods, which have been turned into snakes by magicians (Exodus 7:8–12).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Tight-fitting breeches.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A joke, playing on the alignment of the figurative and literal conditions of having no bowels. Bowels were traditionally believed to be the seat of compassion in the human body; corpses are disemboweled before burial to slow down the process of decomposition.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Scrooge resists a pun. "For a shade": for a ghost. "To a shade": to a degree.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The night watchman of the ward, or district.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The three wise men, or kings, were led by a star to Jesus's birthplace in a stable (Matthew 2:1–12).Return to reference 9

Stave Two

THE FIRST OF THE THREE SPIRITS

When Scrooge awoke, it was so dark, that looking out of bed, he could scarcely distinguish the transparent window from the opaque walls of his chamber. He was endeavouring to pierce the darkness with his ferret eyes, when the chimes of a neighbouring church struck the four quarters. So he listened for the hour.

To his great astonishment the heavy bell went on from six to seven, and from seven to eight, and regularly up to twelve; then stopped. Twelve! It was past two when he went to bed. The clock was wrong. An icicle must have got into the works. Twelve!

He touched the spring of his repeater,[1] to correct this most preposterous clock. Its rapid little pulse beat twelve; and stopped.

"Why, it isn't possible," said Scrooge, "that I can have slept through a whole day and far into another night. It isn't possible that anything has happened to the sun, and this is twelve at noon!"

The idea being an alarming one, he scrambled out of bed, and groped his way to the window. He was obliged to rub the frost off with the sleeve of his dressing-gown before he could see anything; and could see very little then. All he could make out was, that it was still very foggy and extremely cold, and that there was no noise of people running to and fro, and making a great stir, as there unquestionably would have been if night had beaten off bright day, and taken possession of the world. This was a great relief, because "three days after sight of this First of Exchange pay to Mr. Ebenezer Scrooge or his order,"[2] and so forth, would have become a mere United States' security[3] if there were no days to count by.

Scrooge went to bed again, and thought, and thought, and thought it over and over and over, and could make nothing of it. The more he thought, the more perplexed he was; and the more he endeavoured not to think, the more he thought. Marley's Ghost bothered him exceedingly. Every time he resolved within himself,

after mature inquiry, that it was all a dream, his mind flew back again, like a strong spring released, to its first position, and presented the same problem to be worked all through, "Was it a dream or not?"

Scrooge lay in this state until the chimes had gone three quarters more, when he remembered, on a sudden, that the Ghost had warned him of a visitation when the bell tolled one. He resolved to lie awake until the hour was past; and, considering that he could no more go to sleep than go to Heaven, this was perhaps the wisest resolution in his power.

The quarter was so long, that he was more than once convinced he must have sunk into a doze unconsciously, and missed the clock. At length it broke upon his listening ear.

"Ding, dong!"

"A quarter past," said Scrooge, counting.

"Ding, dong!"

"Half past!" said Scrooge.

"Ding, dong!"

"A quarter to it," said Scrooge.

"Ding dong!"

"The hour itself," said Scrooge, triumphantly, "and nothing else!"

He spoke before the hour bell sounded, which it now did with a deep, dull, hollow, melancholy ONE. Light flashed up in the room upon the instant, and the curtains of his bed were drawn.

The curtains of his bed were drawn aside, I tell you, by a hand. Not the curtains at his feet, nor the curtains at his back, but those to which his face was addressed. The curtains of his bed were drawn aside; and Scrooge, starting up into a half-recumbent attitude, found himself face to face with the unearthly visitor who drew them: as close to it as I am now to you, and I am standing in the spirit at your elbow.

It was a strange figure—like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man, viewed through some supernatural medium, which gave him the appearance of having receded from the view, and being

diminished to a child's proportions. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was white as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it, and the tenderest bloom was on the skin. The arms were very long and muscular; the hands the same, as if its hold were of uncommon strength. Its legs and feet, most delicately formed, were, like those upper members, bare. It wore a tunic of the purest white; and round its waist was bound a lustrous belt, the sheen of which was beautiful. It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand; and, in singular contradiction of that wintry emblem, had its dress trimmed with summer flowers. But the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light, by which all this was visible; and which was doubtless the occasion of its using, in its duller moments, a great extinguisher for a cap,[4] which it now held under its arm.

Even this, though, when Scrooge looked at it with increasing steadiness, was *not* its strangest quality. For as its belt sparkled and glittered now in one part and now in another, and what was light one instant, at another time was dark, so the figure itself fluctuated in its distinctness: being now a thing with one arm, now with one leg, now with twenty legs, now a pair of legs without a head, now a head without a body: of which dissolving parts, no outline would be visible in the dense gloom wherein they melted away. And in the very wonder of this, it would be itself again; distinct and clear as ever.

"Are you the Spirit, sir, whose coming was foretold to me?" asked Scrooge.

"I am!"

The voice was soft and gentle. Singularly low, as if instead of being so close beside him, it were at a distance.

"Who, and what are you?" Scrooge demanded.

"I am the Ghost of Christmas Past."

"Long past?" inquired Scrooge: observant of its dwarfish stature.

"No. Your past."

Perhaps, Scrooge could not have told anybody why, if anybody could have asked him; but he had a special desire to see the Spirit in

his cap; and begged him to be covered.

"What!" exclaimed the Ghost, "would you so soon put out, with worldly hands, the light I give? Is it not enough that you are one of those whose passions made this cap, and force me through whole trains of years to wear it low upon my brow!"

Scrooge reverently disclaimed all intention to offend, or any knowledge of having wilfully "bonneted" the Spirit at any period of his life.[5] He then made bold to inquire what business brought him there.

"Your welfare!" said the Ghost.

Scrooge expressed himself much obliged, but could not help thinking that a night of unbroken rest would have been more conducive to that end. The Spirit must have heard him thinking, for it said immediately:

"Your reclamation, then. Take heed!"

It put out its strong hand as it spoke, and clasped him gently by the arm.

"Rise! And walk with me!"

It would have been in vain for Scrooge to plead that the weather and the hour were not adapted to pedestrian purposes; that bed was warm, and the thermometer a long way below freezing; that he was clad but lightly in his slippers, dressing-gown, and nightcap; and that he had a cold upon him at that time. The grasp, though gentle as a woman's hand, was not to be resisted. He rose: but finding that the Spirit made towards the window, clasped its robe in supplication.

"I am a mortal," Scrooge remonstrated, "and liable to fall."

"Bear but a touch of my hand *there*," said the Spirit, laying it upon his heart, "and you shall be upheld in more than this!"

As the words were spoken, they passed through the wall, and stood upon an open country road, with fields on either hand. The city had entirely vanished. Not a vestige of it was to be seen. The darkness and the mist had vanished with it, for it was a clear, cold, winter day, with snow upon the ground.

"Good Heaven!" said Scrooge, clasping his hands together, as he looked about him. "I was bred in this place. I was a boy here!"

The Spirit gazed upon him mildly. Its gentle touch, though it had been light and instantaneous, appeared still present to the old man's sense of feeling. He was conscious of a thousand odours floating in the air, each one connected with a thousand thoughts, and hopes, and joys, and cares long, long, forgotten!

"Your lip is trembling," said the Ghost. "And what is that upon your cheek?"

Scrooge muttered, with an unusual catching in his voice, that it was a pimple; and begged the Ghost to lead him where he would.

"You recollect the way?" inquired the Spirit.

"Remember it!" cried Scrooge with fervour. "I could walk it blindfold."

"Strange to have forgotten it for so many years!" observed the Ghost. "Let us go on."

They walked along the road; Scrooge recognizing every gate, and post, and tree; until a little market-town appeared in the distance, with its bridge, its church, and winding river. Some shaggy ponies now were seen trotting towards them with boys upon their backs, who called to other boys in country gigs and carts, driven by farmers. All these boys were in great spirits, and shouted to each other, until the broad fields were so full of merry music, that the crisp air laughed to hear it.

"These are but shadows of the things that have been," said the Ghost. "They have no consciousness of us."

The jocund travelers came on; and as they came, Scrooge knew and named them every one. Why was he rejoiced beyond all bounds to see them! Why did his cold eye glisten, and his heart leap up as they went past! Why was he filled with gladness when he heard them give each other Merry Christmas, as they parted at cross-roads and bye-ways, for their several homes! What was merry Christmas to Scrooge? Out upon merry Christmas! What good had it ever done to him?

"The school is not quite deserted," said the Ghost. "A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still."

Scrooge said he knew it. And he sobbed.

They left the high-road, by a well remembered lane, and soon approached a mansion of dull red brick, with a little weathercock-surmounted cupola, on the roof, and a bell hanging in it. It was a large house, but one of broken fortunes; for the spacious offices were little used, their walls were damp and mossy, their windows broken, and their gates decayed. Fowls clucked and strutted in the stables; and the coach-houses and sheds were over-run with grass. Nor was it more retentive of its ancient state, within; for entering the dreary hall, and glancing through the open doors of many rooms, they found them poorly furnished, cold, and vast. There was an earthy savour in the air, a chilly bareness in the place, which associated itself somehow with too much getting up by candle-light, and not too much to eat.

They went, the Ghost and Scrooge, across the hall, to a door at the back of the house. It opened before them, and disclosed a long, bare, melancholy room, made barer still by lines of plain deal forms[6] and desks. At one of these a lonely boy was reading near a feeble fire; and Scrooge sat down upon a form, and wept to see his poor forgotten self as he had used to be.

Not a latent echo in the house, not a squeak and scuffle from the mice behind the panneling, not a drip from the half-thawed water-spout in the dull yard behind, not a sigh among the leafless boughs of one despondent poplar, not the idle swinging of an empty store-house door, no, not a clicking in the fire, but fell upon the heart of Scrooge with softening influence, and gave a freer passage to his tears.

The Spirit touched him on the arm, and pointed to his younger self, intent upon his reading. Suddenly a man, in foreign garments: wonderfully real and distinct to look at: stood outside the window, with an axe stuck in his belt, and leading an ass laden with wood by the bridle.

"Why, it's Ali Baba!"[7] Scrooge exclaimed in ecstacy. "It's dear old honest Ali Baba! Yes, yes, I know! One Christmas time, when yonder solitary child was left here all alone, he *did* come, for the first time, just like that. Poor boy! And Valentine," said Scrooge, "and his wild brother, Orson;[8] there they go! And what's his name, who was put down in his drawers, asleep, at the Gate of Damascus;[9] don't you see him! And the Sultan's Groom turned upside-down by the Genii; there he is upon his head! Serve him right. I'm glad of it. What business had *he* to be married to the Princess!"

To hear Scrooge expending all the earnestness of his nature on such subjects, in a most extraordinary voice between laughing and crying; and to see his heightened and excited face; would have been a surprise to his business friends in the city, indeed.

"There's the Parrot!" cried Scrooge. "Green body and yellow tail, with a thing like a lettuce growing out of the top of his head; there he is! Poor Robin Crusoe,[1] he called him, when he came home again after sailing round the island. 'Poor Robin Crusoe, where have you been, Robin Crusoe?' The man thought he was dreaming, but he wasn't. It was the Parrot, you know. There goes Friday, running for his life to the little creek! Halloa! Hoop! Halloo!"

Then, with a rapidity of transition very foreign to his usual character, he said, in pity for his former self, "Poor boy!" and cried again.

"I wish," Scrooge muttered, putting his hand in his pocket, and looking about him, after drying his eyes with his cuff: "but it's too late now."

"What is the matter?" asked the Spirit.

"Nothing," said Scrooge. "Nothing. There was a boy singing a Christmas Carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something: that's all."

The Ghost smiled thoughtfully, and waved its hand: saying as it did so, "Let us see another Christmas!"

Scrooge's former self grew larger at the words, and the room became a little darker and more dirty. The panels shrunk, the

windows cracked; fragments of plaster fell out of the ceiling, and the naked laths were shown instead; but how all this was brought about, Scrooge knew no more than you do. He only knew that it was quite correct; that everything had happened so; that there he was, alone again, when all the other boys had gone home for the jolly holidays.

He was not reading now, but walking up and down despairingly. Scrooge looked at the Ghost, and with a mournful shaking of his head, glanced anxiously towards the door.

It opened; and a little girl, much younger than the boy, came darting in, and putting her arms about his neck, and often kissing him, addressed him as her "Dear, dear brother."

"I have come to bring you home, dear brother!" said the child, clapping her tiny hands, and bending down to laugh. "To bring you home, home, home!"

"Home, little Fan?" returned the boy.

"Yes!" said the child, brimful of glee. "Home, for good and all. Home, for ever and ever. Father is so much kinder than he used to be, that home's like Heaven! He spoke so gently to me one dear night when I was going to bed, that I was not afraid to ask him once more if you might come home; and he said Yes, you should; and sent me in a coach to bring you. And you're to be a man!" said the child, opening her eyes, "and are never to come back here; but first, we're to be together all the Christmas long, and have the merriest time in all the world."

"You are quite a woman, little Fan!" exclaimed the boy.

She clapped her hands and laughed, and tried to touch his head; but being too little, laughed again, and stood on tiptoe to embrace him. Then she began to drag him, in her childish eagerness, towards the door; and he, nothing loth to go, accompanied her.

A terrible voice in the hall cried, "Bring down Master Scrooge's box, there!" and in the hall appeared the schoolmaster himself, who glared on Master Scrooge with a ferocious condescension, and threw him into a dreadful state of mind by shaking hands with him. He then conveyed him and his sister into the veriest old well of a shivering best-parlour that ever was seen, where the maps upon the

wall, and the celestial and terrestrial globes in the windows, were waxy with cold. Here he produced a decanter of curiously light wine, and a block of curiously heavy cake, and administered instalments of those dainties to the young people: at the same time, sending out a meagre servant to offer a glass of "something" to the postboy, who answered that he thanked the gentleman, but if it was the same tap as he had tasted before, he had rather not. Master Scrooge's trunk being by this time tied on to the top of the chaise, the children bade the schoolmaster good-bye right willingly; and getting into it, drove gaily down the garden-sweep: the quick wheels dashing the hoar-frost and snow from off the dark leaves of the evergreens like spray.

"Always a delicate creature, whom a breath might have withered," said the Ghost. "But she had a large heart!"

"So she had," cried Scrooge. "You're right. I will not gainsay it, Spirit. God forbid!"

"She died a woman," said the Ghost, "and had, as I think, children."

"One child," Scrooge returned.

"True," said the Ghost. "Your nephew!"

Scrooge seemed uneasy in his mind; and answered briefly, "Yes."

Although they had but that moment left the school behind them, they were now in the busy thoroughfares of a city, where shadowy passengers passed and repassed; where shadowy carts and coaches battled for the way, and all the strife and tumult of a real city were. It was made plain enough, by the dressing of the shops, that here too it was Christmas time again; but it was evening, and the streets were lighted up.

The Ghost stopped at a certain warehouse door, and asked Scrooge if he knew it.

"Know it!" said Scrooge. "Was I apprenticed here!"

They went in. At sight of an old gentleman in a Welch wig,[2] sitting behind such a high desk, that if he had been two inches taller he must have knocked his head against the ceiling, Scrooge cried in great excitement:

"Why, it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart; it's Fezziwig alive again!"

Old Fezziwig laid down his pen, and looked up at the clock, which pointed to the hour of seven. He rubbed his hands; adjusted his capacious waistcoat; laughed all over himself, from his shoes to his organ of benevolence;[3] and called out in a comfortable, oily, rich, fat, jovial voice:

"Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick!"

Scrooge's former self, now grown a young man, came briskly in, accompanied by his fellow-'prentice.

"Dick Wilkins, to be sure!" said Scrooge to the Ghost. "Bless me, yes. There he is. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Poor Dick! Dear, dear!"

"Yo ho, my boys!" said Fezziwig. "No more work to-night. Christmas Eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer! Let's have the shutters up," cried old Fezziwig, with a sharp clap of his hands, "before a man can say, Jack Robinson!"[4]

You wouldn't believe how those two fellows went at it! They charged into the street with the shutters—one, two, three—had 'em up in their places—four, five, six—barred 'em and pinned 'em—seven, eight, nine—and came back before you could have got to twelve, panting like race-horses.

"Hilli-ho!" cried old Fezziwig, skipping down from the high desk, with wonderful agility. "Clear away, my lads, and let's have lots of room here! Hilli-ho, Dick! Chirrup, Ebenezer!"

Clear away! There was nothing they wouldn't have cleared away, or couldn't have cleared away, with old Fezziwig looking on. It was done in a minute. Every movable was packed off, as if it were dismissed from public life for evermore; the floor was swept and watered, the lamps were trimmed, fuel was heaped upon the fire; and the warehouse was as snug, and warm, and dry, and bright a ball-room, as you would desire to see upon a winter's night.

In came a fiddler with a music-book, and went up to the lofty desk, and made an orchestra of it, and tuned like fifty stomach-aches. In came Mrs. Fezziwig, one vast substantial smile. In came the three Miss Fezziwigs, beaming and loveable. In came the six

young followers whose hearts they broke. In came all the young men and women employed in the business. In came the housemaid, with her cousin, the baker. In came the cook, with her brother's particular friend, the milkman. In came the boy from over the way, who was suspected of not having board enough from his master;[5] trying to hide himself behind the girl from next door but one, who was proved to have had her ears pulled by her Mistress. In they all came, one after another; some shyly, some boldly, some gracefully, some awkwardly, some pushing, some pulling; in they all came, anyhow and everyhow. Away they all went, twenty couple at once, hands half round and back again the other way; down the middle and up again; round and round in various stages of affectionate grouping; old top couple always turning up in the wrong place; new top couple starting off again, as soon as they got there; all top couples at last, and not a bottom one to help them. When this result was brought about, old Fezziwig, clapping his hands to stop the dance, cried out, "Well done!" and the fiddler plunged his hot face into a pot of porter,[6] especially provided for that purpose. But scorning rest upon his reappearance, he instantly began again, though there were no dancers yet, as if the other fiddler had been carried home, exhausted, on a shutter; and he were a bran-new man resolved to beat him out of sight, or perish.

There were more dances, and there were forfeits,[7] and more dances, and there was cake, and there was negus, and there was a great piece of Cold Roast, and there was a great piece of Cold Boiled,[8] and there were mince-pies, and plenty of beer. But the great effect of the evening came after the Roast and Boiled, when the fiddler (an artful dog, mind! The sort of man who knew his business better than you or I could have told it him!) struck up "Sir Roger de Coverley."[9] Then old Fezziwig stood out to dance with Mrs. Fezziwig. Top couple too; with a good stiff piece of work cut out for them; three or four and twenty pair of partners; people who were not to be trifled with; people who *would* dance, and had no notion of walking.

But if they had been twice as many: ah, four times: old Fezziwig would have been a match for them, and so would Mrs. Fezziwig. As

to *her*, she was worthy to be his partner in every sense of the term. If that's not high praise, tell me higher, and I'll use it. A positive light appeared to issue from Fezziwig's calves. They shone in every part of the dance like moons. You couldn't have predicted, at any given time, what would become of 'em next. And when old Fezziwig and Mrs. Fezziwig had gone all through the dance; advance and retire, hold hands with your partner; bow and curtsey; corkscrew; thread-the-needle, and back again to your place; Fezziwig "cut"—cut so deftly, that he appeared to wink with his legs, and came upon his feet again without a stagger.[1]

When the clock struck eleven, this domestic ball broke up. Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig took their stations, one on either side the door, and shaking hands with every person individually as he or she went out, wished him or her a Merry Christmas. When everybody had retired but the two 'prentices, they did the same to them; and thus the cheerful voices died away, and the lads were left to their beds; which were under a counter in the back-shop.

During the whole of this time, Scrooge had acted like a man out of his wits. His heart and soul were in the scene, and with his former self. He corroborated everything, remembered everything, enjoyed everything, and underwent the strangest agitation. It was not until now, when the bright faces of his former self and Dick were turned from them, that he remembered the Ghost, and became conscious that it was looking full upon him, while the light upon its head burnt very clear.

"A small matter," said the Ghost, "to make these silly folks so full of gratitude."

"Small!" echoed Scrooge.

The Spirit signed to him to listen to the two apprentices, who were pouring out their hearts in praise of Fezziwig: and when he had done so, said,

"Why! Is it not? He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four, perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?

"It isn't that," said Scrooge, heated by the remark, and speaking unconsciously like his former, not his latter, self. "It isn't that, Spirit. He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. Say that his power lies in words and looks; in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count 'em up: what then? The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune."

He felt the Spirit's glance, and stopped.

"What is the matter?" asked the Ghost.

"Nothing particular," said Scrooge.

"Something, I think?" the Ghost insisted.

"No," said Scrooge, "No. I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now! That's all."

His former self turned down the lamps as he gave utterance to the wish; and Scrooge and the Ghost again stood side by side in the open air.

"My time grows short," observed the Spirit. "Quick!"

This was not addressed to Scrooge, or to any one whom he could see, but it produced an immediate effect. For again Scrooge saw himself. He was older now; a man in the prime of life. His face had not the harsh and rigid lines of later years; but it had begun to wear the signs of care and avarice. There was an eager, greedy, restless motion in the eye, which showed the passion that had taken root, and where the shadow of the growing tree would fall.

He was not alone, but sat by the side of a fair young girl in a mourning-dress: in whose eyes there were tears, which sparkled in the light that shone out of the Ghost of Christmas Past.

"It matters little," she said, softly. "To you, very little. Another idol has displaced me; and if it can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, I have no just cause to grieve."

"What Idol has displaced you?" he rejoined.

"A golden one."

"This is the even-handed dealing of the world!" he said. "There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty; and there is nothing it

professes to condemn with such severity as the pursuit of wealth!”

“You fear the world too much,” she answered, gently. “All your other hopes have merged into the hope of being beyond the chance of its sordid reproach. I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master-passion, Gain, engrosses you. Have I not?”

“What then?” he retorted. “Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then? I am not changed towards you.”

She shook her head.

“Am I?”

“Our contract is an old one. It was made when we were both poor and content to be so, until, in good season, we could improve our worldly fortune by our patient industry. You *are* changed. When it was made, you were another man.”

“I was a boy,” he said impatiently.

“Your own feeling tells you that you were not what you are,” she returned. “I am. That which promised happiness when we were one in heart, is fraught with misery now that we are two. How often and how keenly I have thought of this, I will not say. It is enough that I *have* thought of it, and can release you.”

“Have I ever sought release?”

“In words. No. Never.”

“In what, then?”

“In a changed nature; in an altered spirit; in another atmosphere of life; another Hope as its great end. In everything that made my love of any worth or value in your sight. If this had never been between us,” said the girl, looking mildly, but with steadiness, upon him; “tell me, would you seek me out and try to win me now? Ah, no!”

He seemed to yield to the justice of this supposition, in spite of himself. But he said, with a struggle, “You think not.”

“I would gladly think otherwise if I could,” she answered, “Heaven knows! When *I* have learned a Truth like this, I know how strong and irresistible it must be. But if you were free to-day, to-

morrow, yesterday, can even I believe that you would choose a dowerless girl—you who, in your very confidence with her, weigh everything by Gain: or, choosing her, if for a moment you were false enough to your one guiding principle to do so, do I not know that your repentance and regret would surely follow? I do; and I release you. With a full heart, for the love of him you once were."

He was about to speak; but with her head turned from him, she resumed.

"You may—the memory of what is past half makes me hope you will—have pain in this. A very, very brief time, and you will dismiss the recollection of it, gladly, as an unprofitable dream, from which it happened well that you awoke. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!"

She left him; and they parted.

"Spirit!" said Scrooge, "show me no more! Conduct me home. Why do you delight to torture me?"

"One shadow more!" exclaimed the Ghost.

"No more!" cried Scrooge. "No more. I don't wish to see it. Show me no more!"

But the relentless Ghost pinioned him in both his arms, and forced him to observe what happened next.

They were in another scene and place: a room, not very large or handsome, but full of comfort. Near to the winter fire sat a beautiful young girl, so like the last that Scrooge believed it was the same, until he saw *her*, now a comely matron, sitting opposite her daughter. The noise in this room was perfectly tumultuous, for there were more children there, than Scrooge in his agitated state of mind could count; and, unlike the celebrated herd in the poem,[2] they were not forty children conducting themselves like one, but every child was conducting itself like forty. The consequences were uproarious beyond belief; but no one seemed to care; on the contrary, the mother and daughter laughed heartily, and enjoyed it very much; and the latter, soon beginning to mingle in the sports, got pillaged by the young brigands most ruthlessly. What would I not have given to be one of them! Though I never could have been so

rude, no, no! I wouldn't for the wealth of all the world have crushed that braided hair, and torn it down; and for the precious little shoe, I wouldn't have plucked it off, God bless my soul ! to save my life. As to measuring her waist in sport, as they did, bold young brood, I couldn't have done it; I should have expected my arm to have grown round it for a punishment, and never come straight again. And yet I should have dearly liked, I own, to have touched her lips; to have questioned her, that she might have opened them; to have looked upon the lashes of her downcast eyes, and never raised a blush; to have let loose waves of hair, an inch of which would be a keepsake beyond price: in short, I should have liked, I do confess, to have had the lightest licence of a child, and yet been man enough to know its value.

But now a knocking at the door was heard, and such a rush immediately ensued that she with laughing face and plundered dress was borne towards it the centre of a flushed and boisterous group, just in time to greet the father, who, came home attended by a man laden with Christmas toys and presents. Then the shouting and the struggling, and the onslaught that was made on the defenceless porter! The scaling him, with chairs for ladders, to dive into his pockets, despoil him of brown-paper parcels, hold on tight by his cravat, hug him round the neck, pommel his back, and kick his legs in irrepressible affection! The shouts of wonder and delight with which the development of every package was received! The terrible announcement that the baby had been taken in the act of putting a doll's frying-pan into his mouth, and was more than suspected of having swallowed a fictitious turkey, glued on a wooden platter! The immense relief of finding this a false alarm! The joy, and gratitude, and ecstacy! They are all indescribable alike. It is enough that by degrees the children and their emotions got out of the parlour and by one stair at a time, up to the top of the house; where they went to bed, and so subsided.

And now Scrooge looked on more attentively than ever, when the master of the house, having his daughter leaning fondly on him, sat down with her and her mother at his own fireside; and when he

thought that such another creature, quite as graceful and as full of promise, might have called him father, and been a spring-time in the haggard winter of his life, his sight grew very dim indeed.

"Belle," said the husband, turning to his wife with a smile, "I saw an old friend of yours this afternoon."

"Who was it?"

"Guess!"

"How can I? Tut, don't I know," she added in the same breath, laughing as he laughed. "Mr. Scrooge."

"Mr. Scrooge it was. I passed his office window; and as it was not shut up, and he had a candle inside, I could scarcely help seeing him. His partner lies upon the point of death, I hear; and there he sat alone. Quite alone in the world, I do believe."

"Spirit!" said Scrooge in a broken voice, "remove me from this place."

"I told you these were shadows of the things that have been," said the Ghost. "That they are what they are, do not blame me!"

"Remove me!" Scrooge exclaimed. "I cannot bear it!"

He turned upon the Ghost, and seeing that it looked upon him with a face, in which in some strange way there were fragments of all the faces it had shown him, wrestled with it.

"Leave me! Take me back. Haunt me no longer!"

In the struggle, if that can be called a struggle in which the Ghost with no visible resistance on its own part was undisturbed by any effort of its adversary, Scrooge observed that its light was burning high and bright; and dimly connecting that with its influence over him, he seized the extinguisher-cap, and by a sudden action pressed it down upon its head.

The Spirit dropped beneath it, so that the extinguisher covered its whole form; but though Scrooge pressed it down with all his force, he could not hide the light: which streamed from under it, in an unbroken flood upon the ground.

He was conscious of being exhausted, and overcome by an irresistible drowsiness; and, further, of being in his own bedroom. He

gave the cap a parting squeeze, in which his hand relaxed; and had barely time to reel to bed, before he sank into a heavy sleep.

Endnotes

- Note 1: A kind of watch that chimes the time when a button is pressed.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The technical wording of a bill of exchange for a debt or credit.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: After the financial crisis of 1837, a number of U.S. states that had borrowed money from European sources to finance public works were unable to pay their debts.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A candle snuffer.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Put a bonnet on.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Long unpainted school benches made of pine ("deal").Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A reference to "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," from the *Arabian Nights*, a popular children's book in Britain.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A reference to *The History of Two Valyannte Brethren, Valentyne and Orson,* a 15th-century French romance, which had become a popular children's story in Britain.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A reference to "Noureddin Ali of Cairo and His Son Bedreddin Hassan," from the *Arabian Nights*.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Scrooge recounts episodes from Daniel Defoe's *Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A woolen or worsted cap, originally made in Montgomery, Wales.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: According to phrenology, the 19th-century science of the shape of the skull determines character, and the area at the top of the forehead reveals the degree to which an individual

possesses, or lacks, feelings of benevolence.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: That is, in an instant; from a comic song of the late 17th century.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Food.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A dark, bitter, beer.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A popular parlor game. One player (the judge) leaves the room; the others each place a small personal item in a bag or box. The judge returns, picks out an item, and describes it; its owner must do something amusing or embarrassing (pay a forfeit) to win it back.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That is, boiled beef and roast beef, both served cold. "Negus": a mixture of fortified wine, such as port or sherry, with hot water, sugar, lemon juice, and nutmeg and other spices.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A popular, if complex, country dance or reel.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, executed a dance step that involves a rapid crossing of the feet in midair.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: From William Wordsworth's "Written in March" (1802): "The cattle are grazing, / Their heads never raising; / There are forty feeding like one!"Return to reference 2

Stave Three

THE SECOND OF THE THREE SPIRITS

Awaking in the middle of a prodigiously tough snore, and sitting up in bed to get his thoughts together, Scrooge had no occasion to be told that the bell was again upon the stroke of One. He felt that he was restored to consciousness in the right nick of time, for the especial purpose of holding a conference with the second messenger dispatched to him through Jacob Marley's intervention. But finding that he turned uncomfortably cold when he began to wonder which of his curtains this new spectre would draw back, he put them every one aside with his own hands; and lying down again, established a sharp look-out all round the bed. For he wished to challenge the Spirit on the moment of its appearance, and did not wish to be taken by surprise and made nervous.



Gentlemen of the free-and-easy sort, who plume themselves on being acquainted with a move or two, and being usually equal to the time-of-day, express the wide range of their capacity for adventure by observing that they are good for anything from pitch-and-toss[3] to manslaughter; between which opposite extremes, no doubt, there

lies a tolerably wide and comprehensive range of subjects. Without venturing for Scrooge quite as hardily as this, I don't mind calling on you to believe that he was ready for a good broad field of strange appearances, and that nothing between a baby and a rhinoceros would have astonished him very much.

Now, being prepared for almost anything, he was not by any means prepared for nothing; and, consequently, when the Bell struck One, and no shape appeared, he was taken with a violent fit of trembling. Five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour went by, yet nothing came. All this time, he lay upon his bed, the very core and centre of a blaze of ruddy light, which streamed upon it when the clock proclaimed the hour; and which being only light, was more alarming than a dozen ghosts, as he was powerless to make out what it meant, or would be at; and was sometimes apprehensive that he might be at that very moment an interesting case of spontaneous combustion, without having the consolation of knowing it. At last, however, he began to think—as you or I would have thought at first; for it is always the person not in the predicament who knows what ought to have been done in it, and would unquestionably have done it too—at last, I say, he began to think that the source and secret of this ghostly light might be in the adjoining room: from whence, on further tracing it, it seemed to shine. This idea taking full possession of his mind, he got up softly and shuffled in his slippers to the door.

The moment Scrooge's hand was on the lock, a strange voice called him by his name, and bade him enter. He obeyed.

It was his own room. There was no doubt about that. But it had undergone a surprising transformation. The walls and ceiling were so hung with living green, that it looked a perfect grove, from every part of which, bright gleaming berries glistened. The crisp leaves of holly, mistletoe, and ivy reflected back the light, as if so many little mirrors had been scattered there; and such a mighty blaze went roaring up the chimney, as that dull petrifaction of a hearth had never known in Scrooge's time, or Marley's, or for many and many a winter season gone. Heaped up upon the floor, to form a kind of

throne, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat, sucking-pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth-cakes,[4] and seething bowls of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam. In easy state upon this couch, there sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see; who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's horn,[5] and held it up, high up, to shed its light on Scrooge, as he came peeping round the door.

"Come in!" exclaimed the Ghost. "Come in! and know me better, man!"

Scrooge entered timidly, and hung his head before this Spirit. He was not the dogged Scrooge he had been; and though its eyes were clear and kind, he did not like to meet them.

"I am the Ghost of Christmas Present," said the Spirit. "Look upon me!"

Scrooge reverently did so. It was clothed in one simple deep green robe, or mantle, bordered with white fur. This garment hung so loosely on the figure, that its capacious breast was bare, as if disdaining to be warded or concealed by any artifice. Its feet, observable beneath the ample folds of the garment, were also bare; and on its head it wore no other covering than a holly wreath set here and there with shining icicles. Its dark brown curls were long and free: free as its genial face, its sparkling eye, its open hand, its cheery voice, its unconstrained demeanour, and its joyful air. Girded round its middle was an antique scabbard; but no sword was in it, and the ancient sheath was eaten up with rust.

"You have never seen the like of me before!" exclaimed the Spirit.

"Never," Scrooge made answer to it.



Scrooge's third Visitor.

"Have never walked forth with the younger members of my family; meaning (for I am very young) my elder brothers born in these later years?" pursued the Phantom.

"I don't think I have," said Scrooge. "I am afraid I have not. Have you had many brothers, Spirit?"

"More than eighteen hundred," said the Ghost.

"A tremendous family to provide for!" muttered Scrooge.

The Ghost of Christmas Present rose.

"Spirit," said Scrooge submissively, "conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson which is working now. To-night, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it."

"Touch my robe!"

Scrooge did as he was told, and held it fast.

Holly, mistletoe, red berries, ivy, turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, meat, pigs, sausages, oysters, pies, puddings, fruit, and punch, all vanished instantly. So did the room, the fire, the ruddy glow, the hour of night, and they stood in the city streets on Christmas morning, where (for the weather was severe) the people made a rough, but brisk and not unpleasant kind of music, in scraping the snow from the pavement in front of their dwellings, and from the tops of their houses: whence it was mad delight to the boys to see it come plumping down into the road below, and splitting into artificial little snowstorms.

The house fronts looked black enough, and the windows blacker, contrasting with the smooth white sheet of snow upon the roofs, and with the dirtier snow upon the ground; which last deposit had been ploughed up in deep furrows by the heavy wheels of carts and wagons; furrows that crossed and recrossed each other hundreds of times where the great streets branched off; and made intricate channels, hard to trace, in the thick yellow mud and icy water. The sky was gloomy, and the shortest streets were choked up with a dingy mist, half thawed half frozen, whose heavier particles descended in a shower of sooty atoms, as if all the chimneys in

Great Britain had, by one consent, caught fire, and were blazing away to their dear hearts' content. There was nothing very cheerful in the climate or the town, and yet was there an air of cheerfulness abroad that the clearest summer air and brightest summer sun might have endeavoured to diffuse in vain.

For the people who were shovelling away on the house-tops were jovial and full of glee; calling out to one another from the parapets, and now and then exchanging a facetious snowball—better-natured missile far than many a wordy jest—laughing heartily if it went right, and not less heartily if it went wrong. The poulterers' shops were still half open, and the fruiterers' were radiant in their glory. There were great, round, pot-bellied baskets of chestnuts, shaped like the waistcoats of jolly old gentlemen, lolling at the doors, and tumbling out into the street in their apoplectic opulence. There were ruddy, brown-faced, broad-girthed Spanish Onions, shining in the fatness of their growth like Spanish Friars; and winking from their shelves in wanton slyness at the girls as they went by, and glanced demurely at the hung-up mistletoe. There were pears and apples, clustered high in blooming pyramids; there were bunches of grapes, made, in the shopkeepers' benevolence, to dangle from conspicuous hooks, that people's mouths might water gratis as they passed; there were piles of filberts, mossy and brown, recalling, in their fragrance, ancient walks among the woods, and pleasant shufflings ankle deep through withered leaves; there were Norfolk Biffins,[6] squab and swarthy, setting off the yellow of the oranges and lemons, and, in the great compactness of their juicy persons, urgently entreating and beseeching to be carried home in paper bags and eaten after dinner. The very gold and silver fish,[7] set forth among these choice fruits in a bowl, though members of a dull and stagnant-blooded race, appeared to know that there was something going on; and, to a fish, went gasping round and round their little world in slow and passionless excitement.

The Grocers'! oh the Grocers'! nearly closed, with perhaps two shutters down, or one; but through those gaps such glimpses! It was not alone that the scales descending on the counter made a merry

sound, or that the twine and roller parted company so briskly, or that the canisters were rattled up and down like juggling tricks, or even that the blended scents of tea and coffee were so grateful to the nose, or even that the raisins were so plentiful and rare, the almonds so extremely white, the sticks of cinnamon so long and straight, the other spices so delicious, the candied fruits so caked and spotted with molten sugar as to make the coldest lookers-on feel faint and subsequently bilious. Nor was it that the figs were moist and pulpy, or that the French plums blushed in modest tartness from their highly-decorated boxes, or that everything was good to eat and in its Christmas dress: but the customers were all so hurried and so eager in the hopeful promise of the day, that they tumbled up against each other at the door, crashing their wicker baskets wildly, and left their purchases upon the counter, and came running back to fetch them, and committed hundreds of the like mistakes in the best humour possible; while the Grocer and his people were so frank and fresh that the polished hearts with which they fastened their aprons behind might have been their own, worn outside for general inspection, and for Christmas daws[8] to peck at if they chose.

But soon the steeples called good people all, to church and chapel, and away they came, flocking through the streets in their best clothes, and with their gayest faces. And at the same time there emerged from scores of bye streets, lanes, and nameless turnings, innumerable people, carrying their dinners to the bakers' shops.[9] The sight of these poor revelers appeared to interest the Spirit very much, for he stood with Scrooge beside him in a baker's doorway, and taking off the covers as their bearers passed, sprinkled incense on their dinners from his torch. And it was a very uncommon kind of torch, for once or twice when there were angry words between some dinner-carriers who had jostled with each other, he shed a few drops of water on them from it, and their good humour was restored directly. For they said, it was a shame to quarrel upon Christmas Day. And so it was! God love it, so it was!

In time the bells ceased, and the bakers' were shut up; and yet there was a genial shadowing forth of all these dinners and the

progress of their cooking, in the thawed blotch of wet above each baker's oven; where the pavement smoked as if its stones were cooking too.

"Is there a peculiar flavour in what you sprinkle from your torch?" asked Scrooge.

"There is. My own."

"Would it apply to any kind of dinner on this day?" asked Scrooge.

"To any kindly given. To a poor one most."

"Why to a poor one most?" asked Scrooge.

"Because it needs it most."

"Spirit," said Scrooge, after a moment's thought, "I wonder you, of all the beings in the many worlds about us, should desire to cramp these people's opportunities of innocent enjoyment."

"I!" cried the Spirit.

"You would deprive them of their means of dining every seventh day, often the only day on which they can be said to dine at all," said Scrooge. "Wouldn't you?"

"I!" cried the Spirit.

"You seek to close these places on the Seventh Day?"[1] said Scrooge. "And it comes to the same thing."

"*I* seek?" exclaimed the Spirit.

"Forgive me if I am wrong. It has been done in your name, or at least in that of your family," said Scrooge.

"There are some upon this earth of yours," returned the Spirit, "who lay claim to know us, and who do their deeds of passion, pride, ill-will, hatred, envy, bigotry, and selfishness in our name; who are as strange to us and all our kith and kin, as if they had never lived. Remember that, and charge their doings on themselves, not us."

Scrooge promised that he would; and they went on, invisible, as they had been before, into the suburbs of the town. It was a remarkable quality of the Ghost (which Scrooge had observed at the baker's) that notwithstanding his gigantic size, he could accommodate himself to any place with ease; and that he stood

beneath a low roof quite as gracefully and like a supernatural creature, as it was possible he could have done in any lofty hall.

And perhaps it was the pleasure the good Spirit had in showing off this power of his, or else it was his own kind, generous, hearty nature, and his sympathy with all poor men, that led him straight to Scrooge's clerk's; for there he went, and took Scrooge with him, holding to his robe; and on the threshold of the door the Spirit smiled, and stopped to bless Bob Cratchit's dwelling with the sprinklings of his torch. Think of that! Bob had but fifteen "Bob"[2] a-week himself; he pocketed on Saturdays but fifteen copies of his Christian name;[3] and yet the Ghost of Christmas Present blessed his four-roomed house!

Then up rose Mrs. Cratchit, Cratchit's wife, dressed out but poorly in a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons, which are cheap and make a goodly show for sixpence; and she laid the cloth, assisted by Belinda Cratchit, second of her daughters, also brave in ribbons; while Master Peter Cratchit plunged a fork into the saucepan of potatoes, and getting the corners of his monstrous shirt-collar (Bob's private property, conferred upon his son and heir in honour of the day) into his mouth, rejoiced to find himself so gallantly attired, and yearned to show his linen in the fashionable Parks.[4] And now two smaller Cratchits, boy and girl, came tearing in, screaming that outside the baker's they had smelt the goose, and known it for their own; and basking in luxurious thoughts of sage-and-onion, these young Cratchits danced about the table, and exalted Master Peter Cratchit to the skies, while he (not proud, although his collars nearly choked him) blew the fire, until the slow potatoes bubbling up, knocked loudly at the saucepan-lid to be let out and peeled.

"What has ever got your precious father then," said Mrs. Cratchit. "And your brother, Tiny Tim! And Martha warn't as late last Christmas Day by half-an-hour!"

"Here's Martha, mother!" said a girl, appearing as she spoke.

"Here's Martha, mother!" cried the two young Cratchits. "Hurrah! There's *such* a goose, Martha!"

"Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!" said Mrs. Cratchit, kissing her a dozen times, and taking off her shawl and bonnet for her, with officious zeal.

"We'd a deal of work to finish up last night," replied the girl, "and had to clear away this morning, mother!"

"Well! Never mind so long as you are come," said Mrs. Cratchit. "Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm, Lord bless ye!"

"No no! There's father coming," cried the two young Cratchits, who were everywhere at once. "Hide Martha, hide!"

So Martha hid herself, and in came little Bob, the father, with at least three feet of comforter exclusive of the fringe, hanging down before him; and his thread-bare clothes darned up and brushed, to look seasonable; and Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Alas for Tiny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame!

"Why, where's our Martha?" cried Bob Cratchit looking round.

"Not coming," said Mrs. Cratchit.

"Not coming!" said Bob, with a sudden declension in his high spirits; for he had been Tim's blood horse[5] all the way from church, and had come home rampant. "Not coming upon Christmas Day!"

Martha didn't like to see him disappointed, if it were only in joke; so she came out prematurely from behind the closet door, and ran into his arms, while the two young Cratchits hustled Tiny Tim, and bore him off into the wash-house, that he might hear the pudding singing in the copper.[6]

"And how did little Tim behave?" asked Mrs. Cratchit, when she had rallied Bob on his credulity and Bob had hugged his daughter to his heart's content.

"As good as gold," said Bob, "and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk and blind men see."[7]

Bob's voice was tremulous when he told them this, and trembled more when he said that Tiny Tim was growing strong and hearty.

His active little crutch was heard upon the floor, and back came Tiny Tim before another word was spoken, escorted by his brother and sister to his stool beside the fire; and while Bob, turning up his cuffs—as if, poor fellow, they were capable of being made more shabby—compounded some hot mixture in a jug with gin and lemons, and stirred it round and round and put it on the hob to simmer; Master Peter and the two ubiquitous young Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon returned in high procession.

Such a bustle ensued that you might have thought a goose the rarest of all birds; a feathered phenomenon, to which a black swan was a matter of course: and in truth it was something very like it in that house. Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy (ready beforehand in a little saucepan) hissing hot; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with incredible vigour; Miss Belinda sweetened up the apple-sauce; Martha dusted the hot plates; Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner at the table; the two young Cratchits set chairs for everybody, not forgetting themselves, and mounting guard upon their posts, crammed spoons into their mouths, lest they should shriek for goose before their turn came to be helped. At last the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs. Cratchit, looking slowly all along the carving-knife, prepared to plunge it in the breast; but when she did, and when the long expected gush of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of delight arose all round the board, and even Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchits, beat on the table with the handle of his knife, and feebly cried Hurrah!

There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavor, size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by the apple-sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed, as Mrs. Cratchit said with great delight (surveying one small atom of a bone upon the dish), they hadn't ate it all at last! Yet every one had had enough, and the youngest

Cratchits in particular, were steeped in sage and onion to the eyebrows! But now, the plates being changed by Miss Belinda, Mrs. Cratchit left the room alone—too nervous to bear witnesses—to take the pudding up, and bring it in.

Suppose it should not be done enough! Suppose it should break in turning out! Suppose somebody should have got over the wall of the back-yard, and stolen it, while they were merry with the goose: a supposition at which the two young Cratchits became livid! All sorts of horrors were supposed.

Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing-day! That was the cloth. A smell like an eating-house, and a pastry cook's next door to each other, with a laundress's next door to that! That was the pudding. In half a minute Mrs. Cratchit entered: flushed, but smiling proudly: with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quartern of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top.

Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs. Cratchit since their marriage. Mrs. Cratchit said that now the weight was off her mind, she would confess she had had her doubts about the quantity of flour. Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for a large family. It would have been flat heresy to do so. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.

At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. The compound in the jug being tasted and considered perfect, apples and oranges were put upon the table, and a shovel-full of chesnuts on the fire. Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth, in what Bob Cratchit called a circle, meaning half a one; and at Bob Cratchit's elbow stood the family display of glass; two tumblers, and a custard-cup without a handle.

These held the hot stuff from the jug, however, as well as golden goblets would have done; and Bob served it out with beaming looks,

while the chesnuts on the fire sputtered and crackled noisily. Then Bob proposed:

"A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!"

Which all the family re-echoed.

"God bless us every one!" said Tiny Tim, the last of all.

He sat very close to his father's side, upon his little stool. Bob held his withered little hand in his, as if he loved the child, and wished to keep him by his side, and dreaded that he might be taken from him.

"Spirit," said Scrooge, with an interest he had never felt before, "tell me if Tiny Tim will live."

"I see a vacant seat," replied the Ghost, "in the poor chimney corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die."

"No, no," said Scrooge. "Oh no, kind Spirit! say he will be spared."

"If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, none other of my race," returned the Ghost, "will find him here. What then? If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population."

Scrooge hung his head to hear his own words quoted by the Spirit, and was overcome with penitence and grief.

"Man," said the Ghost, "if man you be in heart, not adamant, forbear that wicked cant until you have discovered What the surplus is, and Where it is. Will you decide what men shall live, what men shall die? It may be, that in the sight of Heaven, you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child. Oh God! to hear the Insect on the leaf pronouncing on the too much life among his hungry brothers in the dust!"

Scrooge bent before the Ghost's rebuke, and trembling cast his eyes upon the ground. But he raised them speedily, on hearing his own name.

"Mr. Scrooge!" said Bob; "I'll give you Mr. Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!"

"The Founder of the Feast indeed!" cried Mrs. Cratchit, reddening. "I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast

upon, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it."

"My dear," said Bob, "the children; Christmas Day."

"It should be Christmas Day, I am sure," said she, "on which one drinks the health of such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge. You know he is, Robert! Nobody knows it better than you do, poor fellow!"

"My dear," was Bob's mild answer, "Christmas Day."

"I'll drink his health for your sake and the Day's," said Mrs. Cratchit, "not for his. Long life to him! A merry Christmas and a happy new year! He'll be very merry and very happy, I have no doubt!"

The children drank the toast after her. It was the first of their proceedings which had no heartiness in it. Tiny Tim drank it last of all, but he didn't care twopence for it. Scrooge was the Ogre of the family. The mention of his name cast a dark shadow on the party, which was not dispelled for full five minutes.

After it had passed away, they were ten times merrier than before, from the mere relief of Scrooge the Baleful being done with. Bob Cratchit told them how he had a situation in his eye for Master Peter, which would bring in, if obtained, full five-and-sixpence weekly. The two young Cratchits laughed tremendously at the idea of Peter's being a man of business; and Peter himself looked thoughtfully at the fire from between his collars, as if he were deliberating what particular investments he should favour when he came into the receipt of that bewildering income. Martha, who was a poor apprentice at a milliner's, then told them what kind of work she had to do, and how many hours she worked at a stretch, and how she meant to lie a-bed to-morrow morning for a good long rest; to-morrow being a holiday she passed at home. Also how she had seen a countess and a lord some days before, and how the lord "was much about as tall as Peter;" at which Peter pulled up his collars so high that you couldn't have seen his head if you had been there. All this time the chesnuts and the jug went round and round; and bye and bye they had a song, about a lost child travelling in the snow,

from Tiny Tim; who had a plaintive little voice, and sang it very well indeed.

There was nothing of high mark in this. They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from being waterproof; their clothes were scanty; and Peter might have known, and very likely did, the inside of a pawnbroker's. But they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time; and when they faded, and looked happier yet in the bright sprinklings of the Spirit's torch at parting, Scrooge had his eye upon them, and especially on Tiny Tim, until the last.

By this time it was getting dark, and snowing pretty heavily; and as Scrooge and the Spirit went along the streets, the brightness of the roaring fires in kitchens, parlours, and all sorts of rooms, was wonderful. Here, the flickering of the blaze showed preparations for a cosy dinner, with hot plates baking through and through before the fire, and deep red curtains, ready to be drawn, to shut out cold and darkness. There, all the children of the house were running out into the snow to meet their married sisters, brothers, cousins, uncles, aunts, and be the first to greet them. Here, again, were shadows on the window-blind of guests assembling; and there a group of handsome girls, all hooded and fur-booted, and all chattering at once, tripped lightly off to some near neighbour's house; where, woe upon the single man who saw them enter—artful witches: well they knew it—in a glow!

But if you had judged from the numbers of people on their way to friendly gatherings, you might have thought that no one was at home to give them welcome when they got there, instead of every house expecting company, and piling up its fires half-chimney high. Blessings on it, how the Ghost exulted! How it bared its breadth of breast, and opened its capacious palm, and floated on, outpouring, with a generous hand, its bright and harmless mirth on everything within its reach! The very lamplighter, who ran on before, dotting the dusky street with specks of light, and who was dressed to spend the evening somewhere, laughed out loudly as the Spirit passed: though

little kenned the lamp-lighter that he had any company but Christmas!

And now, without a word of warning from the Ghost, they stood upon a bleak and desert moor, where monstrous masses of rude stone were cast about, as though it were the burial-place of giants;[8] and water spread itself wheresoever it listed; or would have done so, but for the frost that held it prisoner; and nothing grew but moss and furze, and coarse, rank grass. Down in the west the setting sun had left a streak of fiery red, which glared upon the desolation for an instant, like a sullen eye, and frowning lower, lower, lower yet, was lost in the thick gloom of darkest night.

"What place is this?" asked Scrooge.

"A place where Miners live, who labour in the bowels of the earth," returned the Spirit. "But they know me. See!"

A light shone from the window of a hut, and swiftly they advanced towards it. Passing through the wall of mud and stone, they found a cheerful company assembled round a glowing fire. An old, old man and woman, with their children and their children's children, and another generation beyond that, all decked out gaily in their holiday attire. The old man, in a voice that seldom rose above the howling of the wind upon the barren waste, was singing them a Christmas song; it had been a very old song when he was a boy; and from time to time they all joined in the chorus. So surely as they raised their voices, the old man got quite blithe and loud; and so surely as they stopped, his vigour sank again.

The Spirit did not tarry here, but bade Scrooge hold his robe, and passing on above the moor, sped whither? Not to sea? To sea. To Scrooge's horror, looking back, he saw the last of the land, a frightful range of rocks, behind them; and his ears were deafened by the thundering of water, as it rolled, and roared, and raged among the dreadful caverns it had worn, and fiercely tried to undermine the earth.

Built upon a dismal reef of sunken rocks, some league or so from shore, on which the waters chafed and dashed, the wild year through, there stood a solitary lighthouse. Great heaps of sea-weed

clung to its base, and storm-birds—born of the wind one might suppose, as sea-weed of the water—rose and fell about it, like the waves they skimmed.

But even here, two men who watched the light had made a fire, that through the loophole in the thick stone wall shed out a ray of brightness on the awful sea. Joining their horny hands over the rough table at which they sat, they wished each other Merry Christmas in their can of grog; and one of them: the elder, too, with his face all damaged and scarred with hard weather, as the figure-head of an old ship might be: struck up a sturdy song that was like a Gale in itself.

Again the Ghost sped on, above the black and heaving sea—on, on—until, being far away, as he told Scrooge, from any shore, they lighted on a ship. They stood beside the helmsman at the wheel, the look-out in the bow, the officers who had the watch; dark, ghostly figures in their several stations; but every man among them hummed a Christmas tune, or had a Christmas thought, or spoke below his breath to his companion of some bygone Christmas Day, with homeward hopes belonging to it. And every man on board, waking or sleeping, good or bad, had had a kinder word for another on that day than on any day in the year; and had shared to some extent in its festivities; and had remembered those he cared for at a distance, and had known that they delighted to remember him.

It was a great surprise to Scrooge, while listening to the moaning of the wind, and thinking what a solemn thing it was to move on through the lonely darkness over an unknown abyss, whose depths were secrets as profound as Death: it was a great surprise to Scrooge, while thus engaged, to hear a hearty laugh. It was a much greater surprise to Scrooge to recognize it as his own nephew's, and to find himself in a bright, dry, gleaming room, with the Spirit standing smiling by his side, and looking at that same nephew with approving affability!

"Ha, ha!" laughed Scrooge's nephew. "Ha, ha, ha!"

If you should happen, by any unlikely chance, to know a man more blest in a laugh than Scrooge's nephew, all I can say is, I

should like to know him too. Introduce him to me, and I'll cultivate his acquaintance.

It is a fair, even-handed, noble adjustment of things, that while there is infection in disease and sorrow, there is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good-humour. When Scrooge's nephew laughed in this way: holding his sides, rolling his head, and twisting his face into the most extravagant contortions: Scrooge's niece, by marriage, laughed as heartily as he. And their assembled friends being not a bit behindhand, roared out, lustily.

"Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"He said that Christmas was a humbug, as I live!" cried Scrooge's nephew. "He believed it too!"

"More shame for him, Fred!" said Scrooge's niece, indignantly. Bless those women; they never do anything by halves. They are always in earnest.

She was very pretty: exceedingly pretty. With a dimpled, surprised-looking, capital face; a ripe little mouth, that seemed made to be kissed—as no doubt it was; all kinds of good little dots about her chin, that melted into one another when she laughed; and the sunniest pair of eyes you ever saw in any little creature's head. Altogether she was what you would have called provoking, you know; but satisfactory, too. Oh, perfectly satisfactory!

"He's a comical old fellow," said Scrooge's nephew, "that's the truth; and not so pleasant as he might be. However, his offences carry their own punishment, and I have nothing to say against him."

"I'm sure he is very rich, Fred," hinted Scrooge's niece. "At least you always tell *me* so."

"What of that, my dear!" said Scrooge's nephew. "His wealth is of no use to him. He don't do any good with it. He don't make himself comfortable with it. He hasn't the satisfaction of thinking—ha, ha, ha!—that he is ever going to benefit Us with it."

"I have no patience with him," observed Scrooge's niece. Scrooge's niece's sisters, and all the other ladies, expressed the same opinion.

"Oh, I have!" said Scrooge's nephew. "I am sorry for him; I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers by his ill whims? Himself, always. Here, he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us. What's the consequence? He don't lose much of a dinner."

"Indeed, I think he loses a very good dinner," interrupted Scrooge's niece. Everybody else said the same, and they must be allowed to have been competent judges, because they had just had dinner; and, with the dessert upon the table, were clustered round the fire, by lamplight.

"Well! I am very glad to hear it," said Scrooge's nephew, "because I haven't any great faith in these young housekeepers. What do *you* say, Topper?"

Topper had clearly got his eye upon one of Scrooge's niece's sisters, for he answered that a bachelor was a wretched outcast, who had no right to express an opinion on the subject. Whereat Scrooge's niece's sister—the plump one with the lace tucker:[9] not the one with the roses—blushed.

"Do go on, Fred," said Scrooge's niece, clapping her hands. "He never finishes what he begins to say! He is such a ridiculous fellow!"

Scrooge's nephew reveled in another laugh, and as it was impossible to keep the infection off; though the plump sister tried hard to do it with aromatic vinegar; his example was unanimously followed.

"I was only going to say," said Scrooge's nephew, "that the consequence of his taking a dislike to us, and not making merry with us, is, as I think, that he loses some pleasant moments, which could do him no harm. I am sure he loses pleasanter companions than he can find in his own thoughts, either in his mouldy old office, or his dusty chambers. I mean to give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not, for I pity him. He may rail at Christmas till he dies, but he can't help thinking better of it—I defy him—if he finds me going there, in good temper, year after year, and saying Uncle Scrooge, how are you? If it only puts him in the vein to leave his

poor clerk fifty pounds, *that's* something; and I think I shook him, yesterday."

It was their turn to laugh now, at the notion of his shaking Scrooge. But being thoroughly good-natured, and not much caring what they laughed at, so that they laughed at any rate, he encouraged them in their merriment, and passed the bottle, joyously.

After tea, they had some music. For they were a musical family, and knew what they were about, when they sung a Glee or Catch,[1] I can assure you: especially Topper, who could growl away in the bass like a good one, and never swell the large veins in his forehead, or get red in the face over it. Scrooge's niece played well upon the harp; and played among other tunes a simple little air (a mere nothing: you might learn to whistle it in two minutes), which had been familiar to the child who fetched Scrooge from the boarding-school, as he had been reminded by the Ghost of Christmas Past. When this strain of music sounded, all the things that Ghost had shown him, came upon his mind; he softened more and more; and thought that if he could have listened to it often, years ago, he might have cultivated the kindnesses of life for his own happiness with his own hands, without resorting to the sexton's spade that buried Jacob Marley.

But they didn't devote the whole evening to music. After a while they played at forfeits; for it is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child himself. Stop! There was first a game at blind-man's buff. Of course there was. And I no more believe Topper was really blind than I believe he had eyes in his boots. My opinion is, that it was a done thing between him and Scrooge's nephew; and that the Ghost of Christmas Present knew it. The way he went after that plump sister in the lace tucker, was an outrage on the credulity of human nature. Knocking down the fire-irons, tumbling over the chairs, bumping up against the piano, smothering himself among the curtains, wherever she went, there went he. He always knew where the plump sister was. He wouldn't catch anybody else. If you had fallen up against him, as some of them did, and stood there; he would have made a

feint of endeavouring to seize you, which would have been an affront to your understanding; and would instantly have sidled off in the direction of the plump sister. She often cried out that it wasn't fair; and it really was not. But when at last, he caught her; when, in spite of all her silken rustlings, and her rapid fluttering past him, he got her into a corner whence there was no escape; then his conduct was the most execrable. For his pretending not to know her; his pretending that it was necessary to touch her head-dress, and further to assure himself of her identity by pressing a certain ring upon her finger, and a certain chain about her neck; was vile, monstrous! No doubt she told him her opinion of it, when, another blind-man being in office, they were so very confidential together, behind the curtains.

Scrooge's niece was not one of the blind-man's buff party, but was made comfortable with a large chair and a footstool, in a snug corner, where the Ghost and Scrooge were close behind her. But she joined in the forfeits, and loved her love to admiration with all the letters of the alphabet.[2] Likewise at the game of How, When, and Where,[3] she was very great, and to the secret joy of Scrooge's nephew, beat her sisters hollow: though they were sharp girls too, as Topper could have told you. There might have been twenty people there, young and old, but they all played, and so did Scrooge; for, wholly forgetting in the interest he had in what was going on, that his voice made no sound in their ears, he sometimes came out with his guess quite loud, and very often guessed right, too; for the sharpest needle, best Whitechapel, warranted not to cut in the eye,[4] was not sharper than Scrooge: blunt as he took it in his head to be.

The Ghost was greatly pleased to find him in this mood, and looked upon him with such favour that he begged like a boy to be allowed to stay until the guests departed. But this the Spirit said could not be done.

"Here is a new game," said Scrooge. "One half hour, Spirit, only one!"

It was a Game called Yes and No, where Scrooge's nephew had to think of something, and the rest must find out what; he only

answering to their questions yes or no as the case was. The brisk fire of questioning to which he was exposed, elicited from him that he was thinking of an animal, a live animal, rather a disagreeable animal, a savage animal, an animal that growled and grunted sometimes, and talked sometimes, and lived in London, and walked about the streets, and wasn't made a show of, and wasn't led by anybody, and didn't live in a menagerie, and was never killed in a market, and was not a horse, or an ass, or a cow, or a bull, or a tiger, or a dog, or a pig, or a cat, or a bear. At every fresh question that was put to him, this nephew burst into a fresh roar of laughter; and was so inexpressibly tickled, that he was obliged to get up off the sofa and stamp. At last the plump sister, falling into a similar state, cried out:

"I have found it out! I know what it is, Fred! I know what it is!"

"What is it?" cried Fred.

"It's your Uncle Scro-o-o-o-oge!"

Which it certainly was. Admiration was the universal sentiment, though some objected that the reply to "Is it a bear?" ought to have been "Yes;" inasmuch as an answer in the negative was sufficient to have diverted their thoughts from Mr. Scrooge, supposing they had ever had any tendency that way.

"He has given us plenty of merriment, I am sure," said Fred, "and it would be ungrateful not to drink his health. Here is a glass of mulled wine ready to our hand at the moment; and I say 'Uncle Scrooge!' "

"Well! Uncle Scrooge!" they cried.

"A Merry Christmas and a happy New Year to the old man, whatever he is!" said Scrooge's nephew. "He wouldn't take it from me, but may he have it, nevertheless. Uncle Scrooge!"

Uncle Scrooge had imperceptibly become so gay and light of heart, that he would have pledged the unconscious company in return, and thanked them in an inaudible speech, if the Ghost had given him time. But the whole scene passed off in the breath of the last word spoken by his nephew; and he and the Spirit were again upon their travels.

Much they saw, and far they went, and many homes they visited, but always with a happy end. The Spirit stood beside sick beds, and they were cheerful; on foreign lands, and they were close at home; by struggling men, and they were patient in their greater hope; by poverty, and it was rich. In almshouse, hospital, and jail, in misery's every refuge, where vain man in his little brief authority[5] had not made fast the door, and barred the Spirit out, he left his blessing, and taught Scrooge his precepts.

It was a long night, if it were only a night; but Scrooge had his doubts of this, because the Christmas Holidays appeared to be condensed into the space of time they passed together. It was strange, too, that while Scrooge remained unaltered in his outward form, the Ghost grew older, clearly older. Scrooge had observed this change, but never spoke of it, until they left a children's Twelfth Night party, when, looking at the Spirit as they stood together in an open place, he noticed that its hair was gray.

"Are spirits' lives so short?" asked Scrooge.

"My life upon this globe, is very brief," replied the Ghost. "It ends to-night."

"To-night!" cried Scrooge.

"To-night at midnight. Hark! The time is drawing near."

The chimes were ringing the three quarters past eleven at that moment.

"Forgive me if I am not justified in what I ask," said Scrooge, looking intently at the Spirit's robe, "but I see something strange, and not belonging to yourself, protruding from your skirts. Is it a foot or a claw!"

"It might be a claw, for the flesh there is upon it," was the Spirit's sorrowful reply. "Look here."

From the folding of its robe, it brought two children; wretched, abject, frightful, hideous, miserable. They knelt down at its feet, and clung upon the outside of its garment.

"Oh, Man! look here. Look, look, down here!" exclaimed the Ghost.

They were a boy and girl. Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish; but prostrate, too, in their humility. Where graceful youth should have filled their features out, and touched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shrivelled hand, like that of age, had pinched, and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds. Where angels might have sat enthroned, devils lurked, and glared out menacing. No change, no degradation, no perversion of humanity, in any grade, through all the mysteries of wonderful creation, has monsters half so horrible and dread.

Scrooge started back, appalled. Having them shown to him in this way, he tried to say they were fine children, but the words choked themselves, rather than be parties to a lie of such enormous magnitude.



"Spirit! are they yours?" Scrooge could say no more.

"They are Man's," said the Spirit, looking down upon them. "And they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but

most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased. Deny it!" cried the Spirit, stretching out its hand towards the city. "Slander those who tell it ye! Admit it for your factious purposes, and make it worse! And bide the end!"

"Have they no refuge or resource?" cried Scrooge.

"Are there no prisons?" said the Spirit, turning on him for the last time with his own words. "Are there no workhouses?"

The bell struck twelve.

Scrooge looked about him for the Ghost, and saw it not. As the last stroke ceased to vibrate, he remembered the prediction of old Jacob Marley, and lifting up his eyes, beheld a solemn Phantom, draped and hooded, coming, like a mist along the ground, towards him.

Endnotes

- Note 3: A street gambling game, in which coins are thrown at a target; the player whose coin is closest tosses the other coins in the air, and keeps all those that land heads-up.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Large pastries, traditionally served on Twelfth Night (January 6).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The horn of plenty (or cornucopia), overflowing with produce, flowers, or nuts, is an ancient classical symbol of abundance and nourishment.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A variety of cooking apple.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Members of the carp family, sold in glass bowls by London street traders at that time.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Jackdaws, a type of crow. Compare with Shakespeare, *Othello* 1.1.64–65: "For I will wear my heart upon my sleeve / For daws to peck at."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: In that period, most cooking in the homes of the poor was done over an open fire; bakers, prohibited from baking on

Sundays and Christmas Day, allowed people to use their ovens for a small charge on those days.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: The Sabbatarianism movement sought to close bakeries and limit entertainment and travel on Sundays.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A shilling (slang).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: This would have been an extraordinarily low salary for someone in this position. Fifteen bob per week translates to 39 pounds per year, whereas most menial clerks could expect to earn 50–150 pounds per year.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, one of the Royal Parks in central London, such as St. James's Park, Green Park, and Hyde Park.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A thoroughbred, particularly a racehorse.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A large vessel, made of copper or cast iron, used primarily for boiling laundry.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: See John 5:1–9 for the account of Jesus's healing of the lame man, and Mark 8:22–25 for the restoration of the blind man's vision.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Cornwall, in the far southwest of Great Britain, is the traditional setting of the children's story "Jack the Giant Killer." In the vision that follows, Dickens is drawing on a visit he made to the county in 1842 to see the appalling conditions experienced by child laborers in the Cornish tin and copper mines.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A piece of lace or linen worn at the top of a bodice or as an insert at the front of a low-cut dress.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A comic song for numerous voices, in which, after the first singer has finished a line, the second begins, or "catches" the words just sung, and so on. "Glee": a song for multiple voices, with distinct harmonizing parts for each.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A word game, in which each player must complete a series of statements with words beginning with A, and then B, and so forth.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: A word game, in which players ask one of their number "How do you like it?" "When do you like it?" and "Where do you like it?" to try to establish the mystery entity of which he or she is thinking.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The eye of a well-made needle has smooth edges so it will not cut the cotton threaded through it. Whitechapel, a poor district east of the City of London, was then the site of needle-making workshops.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Compare with Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure* 2.2.120–22: "But man, proud man, / Dressed in a little brief authority, / Most ignorant of what he's most assured."Return to reference 5

Stave Four

THE LAST OF THE SPIRITS

The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently, approached. When it came near him, Scrooge bent down upon his knee; for in the very air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery.

It was shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible save one outstretched hand. But for this it would have been difficult to detach its figure from the night, and separate it from the darkness by which it was surrounded.

He felt that it was tall and stately when it came beside him, and that its mysterious presence filled him with a solemn dread. He knew no more, for the Spirit neither spoke nor moved.

"I am in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come?" said Scrooge.

The Spirit answered not, but pointed onward with its hand.

"You are about to show me shadows of the things that have not happened, but will happen in the time before us," Scrooge pursued. "Is that so, Spirit?"

The upper portion of the garment was contracted for an instant in its folds, as if the Spirit had inclined its head. That was the only answer he received.

Although well used to ghostly company by this time, Scrooge feared the silent shape so much that his legs trembled beneath him, and he found that he could hardly stand when he prepared to follow it. The Spirit paused a moment, as observing his condition, and giving him time to recover.

But Scrooge was all the worse for this. It thrilled him with a vague uncertain horror, to know that behind the dusky shroud, there were ghostly eyes intently fixed upon him, while he, though he stretched his own to the utmost, could see nothing but a spectral hand and one great heap of black.

"Ghost of the Future!" he exclaimed, "I fear you more than any Spectre I have seen. But, as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear you company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?"

It gave him no reply. The hand was pointed straight before them.

"Lead on!" said Scrooge. "Lead on! The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit!"

The Phantom moved away as it had come towards him. Scrooge followed in the shadow of its dress, which bore him up, he thought, and carried him along.

They scarcely seemed to enter the city; for the city rather seemed to spring up about them, and encompass them of its own act. But there they were, in the heart of it; on 'Change, amongst the merchants; who hurried up and down, and chinked the money in their pockets, and conversed in groups, and looked at their watches, and trifled thoughtfully with their great gold seals;[6] and so forth, as Scrooge had seen them often.

The Spirit stopped beside one little knot of business men. Observing that the hand was pointed to them, Scrooge advanced to listen to their talk.

"No," said a great fat man with a monstrous chin, "I don't know much about it, either way. I only know he's dead."

"When did he die?" inquired another.

"Last night, I believe."

"Why, what was the matter with him?" asked a third, taking a vast quantity of snuff out of a very large snuff-box. "I thought he'd never die."

"God knows," said the first, with a yawn.

"What has he done with his money?" asked a red-faced gentleman with a pendulous excrescence on the end of his nose, that shook like the gills of a turkey-cock.

"I haven't heard," said the man with the large chin, yawning again. "Left it to his Company, perhaps. He hasn't left it to *me*. That's all I know."

This pleasantry was received with a general laugh.

"It's likely to be a very cheap funeral," said the same speaker; "for upon my life I don't know of anybody to go to it. Suppose we make up a party and volunteer?"

"I don't mind going if a lunch is provided," observed the gentleman with the excrescence on his nose. "But I must be fed, if I make one."

Another laugh.

"Well, I am the most disinterested among you, after all," said the first speaker, "for I never wear black gloves,[7] and I never eat lunch. But I'll offer to go, if anybody else will. When I come to think of it, I'm not at all sure that I wasn't his most particular friend; for we used to stop and speak whenever we met. Bye, bye!"

Speakers and listeners strolled away, and mixed with other groups. Scrooge knew the men, and looked towards the Spirit for an explanation.

The Phantom glided on into a street. Its finger pointed to two persons meeting. Scrooge listened again, thinking that the explanation might lie here.

He knew these men, also, perfectly. They were men of business: very wealthy, and of great importance. He had made a point always of standing well in their esteem: in a business point of view, that is; strictly in a business point of view.

"How are you?" said one.

"How are you?" returned the other.

"Well!" said the first. "Old Scratch[8] has got his own at last, hey?"

"So I am told," returned the second. "Cold, isn't it?"

"Seasonable for Christmas time. You're not a skater, I suppose?"

"No. No. Something else to think of. Good morning!"

Not another word. That was their meeting, their conversation, and their parting.

Scrooge was at first inclined to be surprised that the Spirit should attach importance to conversations apparently so trivial; but feeling assured that they must have some hidden purpose, he set himself to

consider what it was likely to be. They could scarcely be supposed to have any bearing on the death of Jacob, his old partner, for that was Past, and this Ghost's province was the Future. Nor could he think of any one immediately connected with himself, to whom he could apply them. But nothing doubting that to whomsoever they applied they had some latent moral for his own improvement, he resolved to treasure up every word he heard, and everything he saw; and especially to observe the shadow of himself when it appeared. For he had an expectation that the conduct of his future self would give him the clue he missed, and would render the solution of these riddles easy.

He looked about in that very place for his own image; but another man stood in his accustomed corner, and though the clock pointed to his usual time of day for being there, he saw no likeness of himself among the multitudes that poured in through the Porch. It gave him little surprise, however; for he had been revolving in his mind a change of life, and thought and hoped he saw his new-born resolutions carried out in this.

Quiet and dark, beside him stood the Phantom, with its outstretched hand. When he roused himself from his thoughtful quest, he fancied from the turn of the hand, and its situation in reference to himself, that the Unseen Eyes were looking at him keenly. It made him shudder, and feel very cold.

They left the busy scene, and went into an obscure part of the town, where Scrooge had never penetrated before, although he recognised its situation, and its bad repute. The ways were foul and narrow; the shops and houses wretched; the people half-naked, drunken, slipshod, ugly. Alleys and archways, like so many cesspools, disgorged their offences of smell, and dirt, and life, upon the straggling streets; and the whole quarter reeked with crime, with filth, and misery.

Far in this den of infamous resort, there was a low-browed, beetling[9] shop, below a pent-house roof, where iron, old rags, bottles, bones, and greasy offal, were bought. Upon the floor within, were piled up heaps of rusty keys, nails, chains, hinges, files, scales,

weights, and refuse iron of all kinds. Secrets that few would like to scrutinise were bred and hidden in mountains of unseemly rags, masses of corrupted fat, and sepulchres of bones. Sitting in among the wares he dealt in, by a charcoal-stove, made of old bricks, was a gray-haired rascal, nearly seventy years of age; who had screened himself from the cold air without, by a frousy curtaining of miscellaneous tatters, hung upon a line; and smoked his pipe in all the luxury of calm retirement.

Scrooge and the Phantom came into the presence of this man, just as a woman with a heavy bundle slunk into the shop. But she had scarcely entered, when another woman, similarly laden, came in too; and she was closely followed by a man in faded black, who was no less startled by the sight of them, than they had been upon the recognition of each other. After a short period of blank astonishment, in which the old man with the pipe had joined them, they all three burst into a laugh.

"Let the charwoman alone to be the first!" cried she who had entered first. "Let the laundress alone to be the second; and let the undertaker's man alone to be the third. Look here, old Joe, here's a chance! If we haven't all three met here without meaning it!"

"You couldn't have met in a better place," said old Joe, removing his pipe from his mouth. "Come into the parlour. You were made free of it long ago, you know; and the other two an't strangers. Stop till I shut the door of the shop. Ah! How it skreeks! There an't such a rusty bit of metal in the place as its own hinges, I believe; and I'm sure there's no such old bones here, as mine. Ha, ha! We're all suitable to our calling, we're all suitable to our calling, we're well matched. Come into the parlour. Come into the parlour."

The parlour was the space behind the screen of rags. The old man raked the fire together with an old stair-rod, and having trimmed his smoky lamp (for it was night), with the stem of his pipe, put it in his mouth again.

While he did this, the woman who had already spoken threw her bundle on the floor and sat down in a flaunting manner on a stool;

crossing her elbows on her knees, and looking with a bold defiance at the other two.

"What odds then! What odds, Mrs. Dilber?" said the woman. "Every person has a right to take care of themselves. *He* always did!"

"That's true, indeed!" said the laundress. "No man more so."

"Why, then, don't stand staring as if you was afraid, woman; who's the wiser? We're not going to pick holes in each other's coats, I suppose?"

"No, indeed!" said Mrs. Dilber and the man together. "We should hope not."

"Very well, then!" cried the woman. "That's enough. Who's the worse for the loss of a few things like these? Not a dead man, I suppose."

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Dilber, laughing.

"If he wanted to keep 'em after he was dead, a wicked old screw," pursued the woman, "why wasn't he natural in his lifetime? If he had been, he'd have had somebody to look after him when he was struck with Death, instead of lying gasping out his last there, alone by himself."

"It's the truest word that ever was spoke," said Mrs. Dilber. "It's a judgment on him."

"I wish it was a little heavier judgment," replied the woman; "and it should have been, you may depend upon it, if I could have laid my hands on anything else. Open that bundle, old Joe, and let me know the value of it. Speak out plain. I'm not afraid to be the first, nor afraid for them to see it. We knew pretty well that we were helping ourselves, before we met here, I believe. It's no sin. Open the bundle, Joe."

But the gallantry of her friends would not allow of this; and the man in faded black, mounting the breach first, produced *his* plunder. It was not extensive. A seal or two, a pencil-case, a pair of sleeve-buttons, and a brooch of no great value, were all. They were severally examined and appraised by old Joe, who chalked the sums he was disposed to give for each, upon the wall, and added them up into a total when he found that there was nothing more to come.

"That's your account," said Joe, "and I wouldn't give another sixpence, if I was to be boiled for not doing it. Who's next?"

Mrs. Dilber was next. Sheets and towels, a little wearing apparel, two old-fashioned silver teaspoons, a pair of sugar-tongs, and a few boots. Her account was stated on the wall in the same manner.

"I always give too much to ladies. It's a weakness of mine, and that's the way I ruin myself," said old Joe. "That's your account. If you asked me for another penny, and made it an open question, I'd repent of being so liberal, and knock off half-a-crown."

"And now undo *my* bundle, Joe," said the first woman.

Joe went down on his knees for the greater convenience of opening it, and having unfastened a great many knots, dragged out a large and heavy roll of some dark stuff.

"What do you call this?" said Joe. "Bed-curtains!"

"Ah!" returned the woman, laughing and leaning forward on her crossed arms. "Bed-curtains!"

"You don't mean to say you took 'em down, rings and all, with him lying there?" said Joe.

"Yes I do," replied the woman. "Why not?"

"You were born to make your fortune," said Joe, "and you'll certainly do it."

"I certainly shan't hold my hand, when I can get anything in it by reaching it out, for the sake of such a man as He was, I promise you, Joe," returned the woman coolly. "Don't drop that oil upon the blankets, now."

"His blankets?" asked Joe.

"Whose else's do you think?" replied the woman. "He isn't likely to take cold without 'em, I dare say."

"I hope he didn't die of anything catching? Eh?" said old Joe, stopping in his work, and looking up.

"Don't you be afraid of that," returned the woman. "I an't so fond of his company that I'd loiter about him for such things, if he did. Ah! You may look through that shirt till your eyes ache; but you won't find a hole in it, nor a thread-bare place. It's the best he had, and a fine one too. They'd have wasted it, if it hadn't been for me."

"What do you call wasting of it?" asked old Joe.

"Putting it on him to be buried in, to be sure," replied the woman with a laugh. "Somebody was fool enough to do it, but I took it off again. If calico an't good enough for such a purpose, it isn't good enough for anything. It's quite as becoming to the body. He can't look uglier than he did in that one."

Scrooge listened to this dialogue in horror. As they sat grouped about their spoil, in the scanty light afforded by the old man's lamp, he viewed them with a detestation and disgust, which could hardly have been greater, though they had been obscene demons, marketing the corpse itself.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the same woman, when old Joe, producing a flannel bag with money in it, told out their several gains upon the ground. "This is the end of it, you see! He frightened every one away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Spirit!" said Scrooge, shuddering from head to foot. "I see, I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my own. My life tends that way, now. Merciful Heaven, what is this!"

He recoiled in terror, for the scene had changed, and now he almost touched a bed: a bare, uncurtained bed: on which, beneath a ragged sheet, there lay a something covered up, which, though it was dumb, announced itself in awful language.

The room was very dark, too dark to be observed with any accuracy, though Scrooge glanced round it in obedience to a secret impulse, anxious to know what kind of room it was. A pale light, rising in the outer air, fell straight upon the bed; and on it, plundered and bereft, unwatched, unwept, uncared for, was the body of this man.

Scrooge glanced towards the Phantom. Its steady hand was pointed to the head. The cover was so carelessly adjusted that the slightest raising of it, the motion of a finger upon Scrooge's part, would have disclosed the face. He thought of it, felt how easy it would be to do, and longed to do it; but had no more power to withdraw the veil than to dismiss the spectre at his side.

Oh cold, cold, rigid, dreadful Death, set up thine altar here, and dress it with such terrors as thou hast at thy command: for this is thy dominion! But of the loved, revered, and honoured head, thou canst not turn one hair to thy dread purposes, or make one feature odious. It is not that the hand is heavy and will fall down when released; it is not that the heart and pulse are still; but that the hand was open, generous, and true; the heart brave, warm, and tender; and the pulse a man's. Strike, Shadow, strike! And see his good deeds springing from the wound, to sow the world with life immortal!

No voice pronounced these words in Scrooge's ears, and yet he heard them when he looked upon the bed. He thought, if this man could be raised up now, what would be his foremost thoughts? Avarice, hard dealing, griping cares? They have brought him to a rich end, truly!

He lay, in the dark empty house, with not a man, a woman, or a child, to say he was kind to me in this or that, and for the memory of one kind word I will be kind to him. A cat was tearing at the door, and there was a sound of gnawing rats beneath the hearth-stone. What *they* wanted in the room of death, and why they were so restless and disturbed, Scrooge did not dare to think.

"Spirit!" he said, "this is a fearful place. In leaving it, I shall not leave its lesson, trust me. Let us go!"

Still the Ghost pointed with an unmoved finger to the head.

"I understand you," Scrooge returned, "and I would do it, if I could. But I have not the power, Spirit. I have not the power."

Again it seemed to look upon him.

"If there is any person in the town, who feels emotion caused by this man's death," said Scrooge quite agonized, "show that person to me, Spirit, I beseech you!"

The phantom spread its dark robe before him for a moment, like a wing; and withdrawing it, revealed a room by daylight, where a mother and her children were.

She was expecting some one, and with anxious eagerness; for she walked up and down the room; started at every sound; looked out from the window; glanced at the clock; tried, but in vain, to work

with her needle; and could hardly bear the voices of the children in their play.

At length the long-expected knock was heard. She hurried to the door, and met her husband; a man whose face was care-worn and depressed, though he was young. There was a remarkable expression in it now; a kind of serious delight of which he felt ashamed, and which he struggled to repress.

He sat down to the dinner that had been hoarding for him by the fire; and when she asked him faintly what news (which was not until after a long silence), he appeared embarrassed how to answer.

"Is it good," she said, "or bad?"—to help him.

"Bad," he answered.

"We are quite ruined?"

"No. There is hope yet, Caroline."

"If *he* relents," she said, amazed, "there is! Nothing is past hope, if such a miracle has happened."

"He is past relenting," said her husband. "He is dead."

She was a mild and patient creature if her face spoke truth; but she was thankful in her soul to hear it, and she said so, with clasped hands. She prayed forgiveness the next moment, and was sorry; but the first was the emotion of her heart.

"What the half-drunken woman whom I told you of last night, said to me, when I tried to see him and obtain a week's delay; and what I thought was a mere excuse to avoid me; turns out to have been quite true. He was not only very ill, but dying, then."

"To whom will our debt be transferred?"

"I don't know. But before that time we shall be ready with the money; and even though we were not, it would be bad fortune indeed to find so merciless a creditor in his successor. We may sleep to-night with light hearts, Caroline!"

Yes. Soften it as they would, their hearts were lighter. The children's faces, hushed and clustered round to hear what they so little understood, were brighter; and it was a happier house for this man's death! The only emotion that the Ghost could show him, caused by the event, was one of pleasure.

"Let me see some tenderness connected with a death," said Scrooge; "or that dark chamber, Spirit, which we left just now, will be for ever present to me."

The Ghost conducted him through several streets familiar to his feet; and as they went along, Scrooge looked here and there to find himself, but nowhere was he to be seen. They entered poor Bob Cratchit's house; the dwelling he had visited before; and found the mother and the children seated round the fire.

Quiet. Very quiet. The noisy little Cratchits were as still as statues in one corner, and sat looking up at Peter, who had a book before him. The mother and her daughters were engaged in sewing. But surely they were very quiet!

"'And He took a child, and set him in the midst of them.'"[1]

Where had Scrooge heard those words? He had not dreamed them. The boy must have read them out, as he and the Spirit crossed the threshold. Why did he not go on?

The mother laid her work upon the table, and put her hand up to her face.

"The colour hurts my eyes," she said.

The colour? Ah, poor Tiny Tim!

"They're better now again," said Cratchit's wife. "It makes them weak by candle-light; and I wouldn't show weak eyes to your father when he comes home, for the world. It must be near his time."

"Past it rather," Peter answered, shutting up his book. "But I think he has walked a little slower than he used, these few last evenings, mother."

They were very quiet again. At last she said, and in a steady cheerful voice, that only faultered once:

"I have known him walk with—I have known him walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder, very fast indeed."

"And so have I," cried Peter. "Often."

"And so have I!" exclaimed another. So had all.

"But he was very light to carry," she resumed, intent upon her work, "and his father loved him so, that it was no trouble: no

trouble. And there is your father at the door!"

She hurried out to meet him; and little Bob in his comforter—he had need of it, poor fellow—came in. His tea was ready for him on the hob, and they all tried who should help him to it most. Then the two young Cratchits got upon his knees and laid, each child a little cheek, against his face, as if they said, "Don't mind it, father. Don't be grieved!"

Bob was very cheerful with them, and spoke pleasantly to all the family. He looked at the work upon the table, and praised the industry and speed of Mrs. Cratchit and the girls. They would be done long before Sunday he said.

"Sunday! You went to-day then, Robert?" said his wife.

"Yes, my dear," returned Bob. "I wish you could have gone. It would have done you good to see how green a place it is. But you'll see it often. I promised him that I would walk there on a Sunday. My little, little child!" cried Bob. "My little child!"

He broke down all at once. He couldn't help it. If he could have helped it, he and his child would have been farther apart perhaps than they were.

He left the room, and went up stairs into the room above, which was lighted cheerfully, and hung with Christmas. There was a chair set close beside the child, and there were signs of some one having been there, lately. Poor Bob sat down in it, and when he had thought a little and composed himself, he kissed the little face. He was reconciled to what had happened, and went down again quite happy.

They drew about the fire, and talked; the girls and mother working still. Bob told them of the extraordinary kindness of Mr. Scrooge's nephew, whom he had scarcely seen but once, and who, meeting him in the street that day, and seeing that he looked a little —"just a little down you know" said Bob, enquired what had happened to distress him. "On which," said Bob, "for he is the pleasantest-spoken gentleman you ever heard, I told him. 'I am heartily sorry for it, Mr. Cratchit,' he said, 'and heartily sorry for your good wife.' By the bye, how he ever knew *that*, I don't know."

"Knew what, my dear?"

"Why, that you were a good wife," replied Bob.

"Everybody knows that!" said Peter.

"Very well observed, my boy!" cried Bob. "I hope they do. 'Heartily sorry,' he said, 'for your good wife. If I can be of service to you in any way,' he said, giving me his card, 'that's where I live. Pray come to me.' Now, it wasn't," cried Bob, "for the sake of anything he might be able to do for us, so much as for his kind way, that this was quite delightful. It really seemed as if he had known our Tiny Tim, and felt with us."

"I'm sure he's a good soul!" said Mrs. Cratchit.

"You would be surer of it, my dear," returned Bob, "if you saw and spoke to him. I shouldn't be at all surprised, mark what I say, if he got Peter a better situation."

"Only hear that, Peter," said Mrs. Cratchit.

"And then," cried one of the girls, "Peter will be keeping company with some one, and setting up for himself."

"Get along with you!" retorted Peter, grinning.

"It's just as likely as not," said Bob, "one of these days; though there's plenty of time for that, my dear. But however and whenever we part from one another, I am sure we shall none of us forget poor Tiny Tim—shall we—or this first parting that there was among us?"

"Never, father!" cried they all.

"And I know," said Bob, "I know, my dears, that when we recollect how patient and how mild he was; although he was a little, little child; we shall not quarrel easily among ourselves, and forget poor Tiny Tim in doing it."

"No, never, father!" they all cried again.

"I am very happy," said little Bob, "I am very happy!"

Mrs. Cratchit kissed him, his daughters kissed him, the two young Cratchits kissed him, and Peter and himself shook hands. Spirit of Tiny Tim, thy childish essence was from God!

"Spectre," said Scrooge, "something informs me that our parting moment is at hand. I know it, but I know not how. Tell me what man that was whom we saw lying dead?"

The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come conveyed him, as before—though at a different time, he thought: indeed, there seemed no order in these latter visions, save that they were in the Future—into the resorts of business men, but showed him not himself. Indeed, the Spirit did not stay for anything, but went straight on, as to the end just now desired, until besought by Scrooge to tarry for a moment.

"This court," said Scrooge, "through which we hurry now, is where my place of occupation is, and has been for a length of time. I see the house. Let me behold what I shall be, in days to come."

The Spirit stopped; the hand was pointed elsewhere.

"The house is yonder," Scrooge exclaimed.

"Why do you point away?"

The inexorable finger underwent no change.

Scrooge hastened to the window of his office, and looked in. It was an office still, but not his. The furniture was not the same, and the figure in the chair was not himself. The Phantom pointed as before.

He joined it once again, and wondering why and whither he had gone, accompanied it until they reached an iron gate. He paused to look round before entering.

A churchyard. Here, then, the wretched man whose name he had now to learn, lay underneath the ground. It was a worthy place. Walled in by houses; overrun by grass and weeds, the growth of vegetation's death, not life; choked up with too much burying; fat with repleted appetite. A worthy place!

The Spirit stood among the graves, and pointed down to One. He advanced towards it trembling. The Phantom was exactly as it had been, but he dreaded that he saw new meaning in its solemn shape.

"Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point," said Scrooge, "answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of the things that May be, only?"

Still the Ghost pointed downward to the grave by which it stood.

"Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead," said Scrooge. "But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me!"

The Spirit was immovable as ever.

Scrooge crept towards it, trembling as he went; and following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name, EBENEZER SCROOGE.



The last of the Spirits.

"Am *I* that man who lay upon the bed?" he cried, upon his knees.

The finger pointed from the grave to him, and back again.

"No, Spirit! Oh no, no!"

The finger still was there.

"Spirit!" he cried, tight clutching at its robe, "hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been but for this intercourse. Why show me this, if I am past all hope?"

For the first time the hand appeared to shake.

"Good Spirit," he pursued, as down upon the ground he fell before it: "Your nature intercedes for me, and pities me. Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by an altered life!"

The kind hand trembled.

"I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!"

In his agony, he caught the spectral hand. It sought to free itself, but he was strong in his entreaty, and detained it. The Spirit, stronger yet, repulsed him.

Holding up his hands in one last prayer to have his fate reversed, he saw an alteration in the Phantom's hood and dress. It shrunk, collapsed, and dwindled down into a bedpost.

Endnotes

- Note 6: Men of business carried seals, in the form of medallions or rings, so that they could impress their own distinctive marks into the wax used to close or authenticate documents.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: It was customary to present mourners at a funeral with a pair of black gloves.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The devil (slang).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Projecting, overhanging.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Matthew 18:2 and Mark 9:36.Return to reference 1

Stave Five

THE END OF IT

Yes! and the bedpost was his own. The bed was his own, the room was his own. Best and happiest of all, the Time before him was his own, to make amends in!

"I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!" Scrooge repeated, as he scrambled out of bed. "The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. Oh Jacob Marley! Heaven, and the Christmas Time be praised for this! I say it on my knees, old Jacob; on my knees!"

He was so fluttered and so glowing with his good intentions, that his broken voice would scarcely answer to his call. He had been sobbing violently in his conflict with the Spirit, and his face was wet with tears.

"They are not torn down," cried Scrooge, folding one of his bed-curtains in his arms, "they are not torn down, rings and all. They are here: I am here: the shadows of the things that would have been, may be dispelled. They will be. I know they will!"

His hands were busy with his garments all this time: turning them inside out, putting them on upside down, tearing them, mislaying them, making them parties to every kind of extravagance.

"I don't know what to do!" cried Scrooge, laughing and crying in the same breath; and making a perfect Laocoön[2] of himself with his stockings. "I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a school-boy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world. Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!"

He had frisked into the sitting-room, and was now standing there: perfectly winded.

"There's the saucepan that the gruel was in!" cried Scrooge, starting off again, and going round the fire-place. "There's the door, by which the Ghost of Jacob Marley entered! There's the corner where the Ghost of Christmas Present, sat! There's the window

where I saw the wandering Spirits! It's all right, it's all true, it all happened. Ha ha ha!"

Really, for a man who had been out of practice for so many years, it was a splendid laugh, a most illustrious laugh. The father of a long, long, line of brilliant laughs!

"I don't know what day of the month it is!" said Scrooge. "I don't know how long I've been among the Spirits. I don't know anything. I'm quite a baby. Never mind. I don't care. I'd rather be a baby. Hallo! Whoop! Hallo here!"

He was checked in his transports by the churches ringing out the lustiest peals he had ever heard. Clash, clang, hammer, ding, dong, bell. Bell, dong, ding, hammer, clang, clash! Oh, glorious, glorious!

Running to the window, he opened it, and put out his head. No fog, no mist; clear, bright, jovial, stirring, cold; cold, piping for the blood to dance to; Golden sunlight; Heavenly sky; sweet fresh air; merry bells. Oh, glorious. Glorious!

"What's to-day?" cried Scrooge, calling downward to a boy in Sunday clothes, who perhaps had loitered in to look about him.

"Eh?" returned the boy, with all his might of wonder.

"What's to-day, my fine fellow?" said Scrooge.

"To-day!" replied the boy. "Why, Christmas Day."

"It's Christmas Day!" said Scrooge to himself. "I haven't missed it. The Spirits have done it all in one night. They can do anything they like. Of course they can. Of course they can. Hallo, my fine fellow!"

"Hallo!" returned the boy.

"Do you know the Poulterer's, in the next street but one, at the corner?" Scrooge inquired.

"I should hope I did," replied the lad.

"An intelligent boy!" said Scrooge. "A remarkable boy! Do you know whether they've sold the prize Turkey that was hanging up there? Not the little prize Turkey: the big one?"

"What, the one as big as me?" returned the boy.

"What a delightful boy!" said Scrooge. "It's a pleasure to talk to him. Yes, my buck!"

"It's hanging there now," replied the boy.

"Is it?" said Scrooge. "Go and buy it."

"Walk-ER!"[3] exclaimed the boy.

"No, no," said Scrooge, "I am in earnest. Go and buy it, and tell 'em to bring it here, that I may give them the direction where to take it. Come back with the man, and I'll give you a shilling. Come back with him in less than five minutes, and I'll give you half-a-crown!"

The boy was off like a shot. He must have had a steady hand at a trigger who could have got a shot off half so fast.

"I'll send it to Bob Cratchit's!" whispered Scrooge, rubbing his hands, and splitting with a laugh. "He sha'n't know who sends it. It's twice the size of Tiny Tim. Joe Miller never made such a joke[4] as sending it to Bob's will be!"

The hand in which he wrote the address was not a steady one, but write it he did, somehow, and went down stairs to open the street door, ready for the coming of the poulterer's man. As he stood there, waiting his arrival, the knocker caught his eye.

"I shall love it, as long as I live!" cried Scrooge, patting it with his hand. "I scarcely ever looked at it before. What an honest expression it has in its face! It's a wonderful knocker!—Here's the Turkey. Hallo! Whoop! How are you! Merry Christmas!"

It *was* a Turkey! He never could have stood upon his legs, that bird. He would have snapped 'em short off in a minute, like sticks of sealing-wax.

"Why, it's impossible to carry that to Camden Town," said Scrooge. "You must have a cab."

The chuckle with which he said this, and the chuckle with which he paid for the Turkey, and the chuckle with which he paid for the cab, and the chuckle with which he recompensed the boy, were only to be exceeded by the chuckle with which he sat down breathless in his chair again, and chuckled till he cried.

Shaving was not an easy task, for his hand continued to shake very much; and shaving requires attention, even when you don't dance while you are at it. But if he had cut the end of his nose off,

he would have put a piece of sticking-plaister over it, and been quite satisfied.

He dressed himself "all in his best," and at last got out into the streets. The people were by this time pouring forth, as he had seen them with the Ghost of Christmas Present; and walking with his hands behind him, Scrooge regarded every one with a delighted smile. He looked so irresistibly pleasant, in a word, that three or four good-humoured fellows said, "Good morning, sir! A merry Christmas to you!" And Scrooge said often afterwards, that of all the blithe sounds he had ever heard, those were the blithest in his ears.

He had not gone far, when coming on towards him he beheld the portly gentleman, who had walked into his counting-house the day before and said, "Scrooge and Marley's, I believe?" It sent a pang across his heart to think how this old gentleman would look upon him when they met; but he knew what path lay straight before him, and he took it.

"My dear sir," said Scrooge, quickening his pace, and taking the old gentleman by both his hands. "How do you do? I hope you succeeded yesterday. It was very kind of you. A merry Christmas to you, sir!"

"Mr. Scrooge?"

"Yes," said Scrooge. "That is my name, and I fear it may not be pleasant to you. Allow me to ask your pardon. And will you have the goodness"—here Scrooge whispered in his ear.

"Lord bless me!" cried the gentleman, as if his breath were gone. "My dear Mr. Scrooge, are you serious?"

"If you please," said Scrooge. "Not a farthing less. A great many back-payments are included in it, I assure you. Will you do me that favour?"

"My dear sir," said the other, shaking hands with him. "I don't know what to say to such munifi—"

"Don't say anything, please," retorted Scrooge. "Come and see me. Will you come and see me?"

"I will!" cried the old gentleman. And it was clear he meant to do it.

"Thank 'ee," said Scrooge. "I am much obliged to you. I thank you fifty times. Bless you!"

He went to church, and walked about the streets, and watched the people hurrying to and fro, and patted children on the head, and questioned beggars, and looked down into the kitchens of houses, and up to the windows; and found that everything could yield him pleasure. He had never dreamed that any walk—that anything—could give him so much happiness. In the afternoon, he turned his steps towards his nephew's house.

He passed the door a dozen times, before he had the courage to go up and knock. But he made a dash, and did it:

"Is your master at home, my dear?" said Scrooge to the girl. Nice girl! Very.

"Yes, sir."

"Where is he, my love?" said Scrooge.

"He's in the dining-room, sir, along with mistress. I'll show you up stairs, if you please."

"Thank 'ee. He knows me," said Scrooge, with his hand already on the dining-room lock. "I'll go in here, my dear."

He turned it gently, and sidled his face in, round the door. They were looking at the table (which was spread out in great array); for these young housekeepers are always nervous on such points, and like to see that everything is right.

"Fred!" said Scrooge.

Dear heart alive, how his niece by marriage started! Scrooge had forgotten, for the moment, about her sitting in the corner with the footstool, or he wouldn't have done it, on any account.

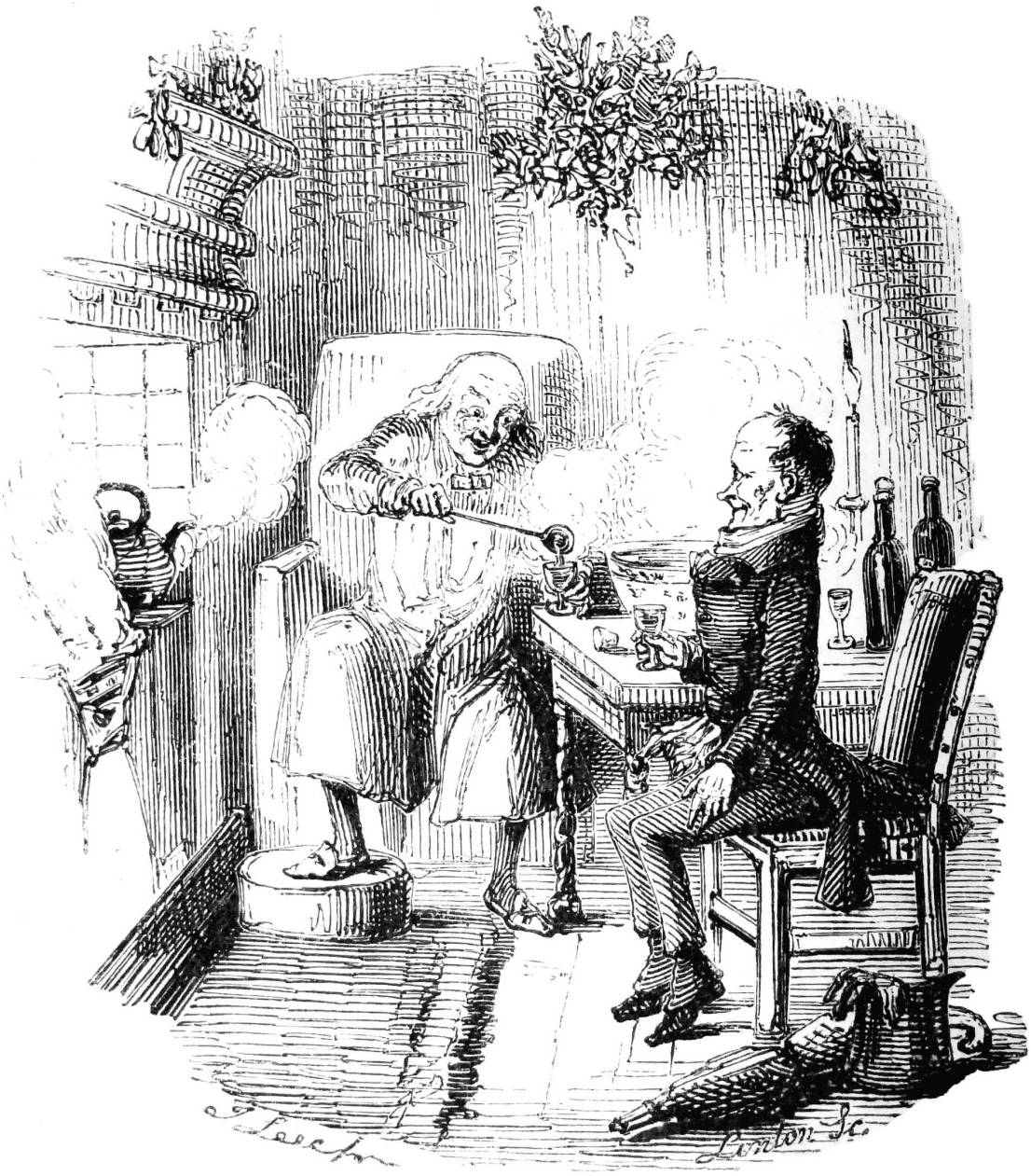
"Why bless my soul!" cried Fred, "who's that?"

"It's I. Your uncle Scrooge. I have come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred?"

Let him in! It is a mercy he didn't shake his arm off. He was at home in five minutes. Nothing could be heartier. His niece looked just the same. So did Topper when *he* came. So did the plump sister, when *she* came. So did every one when *they* came. Wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful unanimity, won-der-ful happiness!

But he was early at the office next morning. Oh he was early there. If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit coming late! That was the thing he had set his heart upon.

And he did it; yes he did! The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob. He was full eighteen minutes and a half, behind his time. Scrooge sat with his door wide open, that he might see him come into the Tank.



His hat was off, before he opened the door; his comforter too. He was on his stool in a jiffy; driving away with his pen, as if he were trying to overtake nine o'clock.

"Hallo!" growled Scrooge, in his accustomed voice as near as he could feign it. "What do you mean by coming here at this time of day?"

"I am very sorry, sir," said Bob. "I *am* behind my time."

"You are?" repeated Scrooge. "Yes. I think you are. Step this way, if you please."

"It's only once a year, sir," pleaded Bob, appearing from the Tank. "It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday, sir."

"Now, I'll tell you what, my friend," said Scrooge, "I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore," he continued, leaping from his stool, and giving Bob such a dig in the waistcoat that he staggered back into the Tank again: "and therefore I am about to raise your salary!"

Bob trembled, and got a little nearer to the ruler. He had a momentary idea of knocking Scrooge down with it; holding him; and calling to the people in the court for help and a strait-waistcoat.[5]

"A merry Christmas, Bob!" said Scrooge, with an earnestness that could not be mistaken, as he clapped him on the back. "A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you, for many a year! I'll raise your salary, and endeavour to assist your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop,[6] Bob! Make up the fires, and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit!"

Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did NOT die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset;

and knowing that such as these would be blind anyway, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins, as have the malady in less attractive forms. His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him.

He had no further intercourse with Spirits, but lived upon the Total Abstinence Principle,[7] ever afterwards; and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God Bless Us, Every One!

THE END.

1843

Endnotes

- Note 2: A Trojan priest who, according to Virgil (*Aeneid* 2.130), so offended the goddess Athena by warning his people about the Greeks' wooden horse trick that she sent two giant sea serpents to strangle him and his two sons. His struggle with the snakes is the subject of a famous classical sculpture.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: An expression of surprise, ridicule, or incredulity (London slang, of uncertain origin).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The supposed jokes of Joe Miller (1684–1738), a comic actor, were collected in the popular *Jest-Book*, first published in 1739.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Used, like a straitjacket, to subdue violent prisoners or patients by binding their arms to their bodies.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A popular Christmas drink, made by combining red wine or port with sugar, spices, and oranges and called "bishop" because of its purple color.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: That is, teetotalism; the watchword of an extreme temperance movement of the 1830s, which encouraged individuals to pledge never to drink intoxicating beverages again. Dickens here puns on *spirits*, which can indicate "alcohol" or "ghosts."Return to reference 7

ROBERT BROWNING
1812–1889

Gerard Manley Hopkins once described Robert Browning as "a man bouncing up from table with his mouth full of bread and cheese and saying that he meant to stand no blasted nonsense." This kind of vitality is apparent in nearly all of Browning's writings. Like the poetry of John Donne (1572–1631), the soliloquies of William Shakespeare (1564–1616), and certain passages of Geoffrey Chaucer (1340s–1400), Browning's poetry often uses a discordant style and unexpected juxtapositions to startle the reader into an awareness of a world of everyday realities and trivialities. His characteristic form was the dramatic monologue, a poem that presents itself as a speech delivered by a created character. Some take the form of soliloquies, uttered by the speaker to himself or herself; others are addressed to another character or characters who remain silent. As Browning uses it, the dramatic monologue separates the speaker from the poet in such a way that the reader must work through the words of the speaker to discover the meaning of the poet. For example, in the well-known early monologue "My Last Duchess" (1842), we listen to the duke as he speaks of his dead wife. From his one-sided conversation we piece together the situation, both past and present, and we infer what sort of woman the duchess really was and what sort of man the duke is. Ultimately, we may also infer what the poet himself thinks of the speaker he has created. In the instance of the duke, it may be fairly

easy to reach such a judgment; however, many of Browning's poems are far less stable, and it is difficult to discern the relationship of the poet to his speaker. In " 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came' " (1855), for example, is the speaker describing a phantasmagoric landscape of his own paranoid imagining, or is the poem a fable of courage and defiance in a modern wasteland?

Robert Browning was born in Camberwell, a London suburb. His father, a bank clerk, was a learned man with an extensive library. His mother was a kind and religious woman, interested in music, whose love for her brilliant son was warmly reciprocated. Until the time of his marriage at the age of thirty-four, Browning was rarely absent from his parents' home. He attended a boarding school near Camberwell, traveled to Russia and Italy, and was a student at the University College London for a short period, but he preferred to pursue his education at home, where he was tutored in foreign languages, music, boxing, and horsemanship and where he read omnivorously.

An intensely private man in many ways, after some early ventures into Romantic self-expression in the style of Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822), Browning sought to reduce the personal element in his work. One way to do this was to write plays instead of soul-searching narratives or lyrics. In 1836, encouraged by the actor W. C. Macready (1793–1873), Browning began work on his first play, *Strafford*, a historical tragedy that lasted only four nights when it was produced in London in 1837. For ten years the young writer struggled to write for the theater, but all his stage productions were failures. Nevertheless, writing dialogue for actors led him to explore another form more congenial to his genius. His first collection of dramatic monologues, *Dramatic Lyrics*, appeared in 1842, but it received no more critical enthusiasm than did his plays. In 1840, he published a long poem in heroic couplets, *Sordello*, which cemented his reputation for obscurity. Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881) wrote to a friend that his wife Jane had read through the poem "without being able to make out whether 'Sordello' was a man, or a city, or a book."

For many of his middle years, Browning was best known as the lover, husband, and helpmeet of his wife Elizabeth Barrett (1806–1861). Few would have forecast the outcome when Browning met Elizabeth Barrett in 1845. She was six years older than he was, and a semi-invalid, jealously guarded by her possessively tyrannical father. Nevertheless, they eloped to Italy together, and both parties thrived in the new environment. Elizabeth Barrett Browning became one of the period's most popular and important poets. Meanwhile, Robert Browning became fascinated with the literature, culture, and politics of Italy. He was particularly interested in the art and culture of the Renaissance: to him it represented an intriguing combination of deeply held religious faith, hedonism—or an excessive enjoyment of sensual pleasure—and extraordinary artistic creativity. Many of his poems are engaged with questions raised by the relationship between great art and great culture in this period. The happy fifteen-year sojourn in Italy ended in 1861 with Elizabeth's death. After this time, the widower returned to London with his son.

Many of the poems that are reproduced here and for which Browning is best known appeared first in his two-volume *Men and Women* in 1855; however, it was really only after the publication of the long blank-verse poem *The Ring and the Book* in 1868 that his reputation as an important and serious poet was established. This poem was inspired by his discovery of an old book of legal records concerning a murder trial in seventeenth-century Rome. It tells the story of a brutally sadistic husband, Count Guido Franceschini, who grew dissatisfied with his young wife, Pompilia, and accused her of having adulterous relations with the priest who tried to rescue her. Eventually Guido stabbed his wife to death and was himself executed. In a series of twelve books, Browning retells this tale of violence, presenting it from the contrasting points of view of participants and spectators. This work was both a commercial and a critical success.

During the London years Browning became extremely fond of social life; however, Browning's character seemed, in Thomas Hardy's words, "*the* literary puzzle of the nineteenth century." Just as

Browning's character is hard to identify so are his poems sometimes difficult to relate to the age in which they were written. Bishops and painters of the Renaissance, an inmate of a Spanish monastery, Shakespeare's "man-monster" on a distant isle—as we explore this gallery of talking portraits we seem to be in remote times or places, far from the world of steam engines and disputes about human beings' descent from the ape. Yet many of these portraits explore problems that confronted Browning's contemporaries, especially problems of faith and doubt, of good and evil, and of the function of the artist in modern life. "Caliban upon Setebos," for example, is a highly topical critique of Darwinism and of natural (as opposed to supernatural) religions. Browning's own attitude toward these topics is partially concealed because of his use of speakers and settings from earlier ages, yet we do encounter certain recurrent religious assumptions that we can safely assign to the poet himself. The most recurrent is that God has created an imperfect world as a kind of testing ground, a "vale of soul-making," as John Keats had said.

When Browning died, in 1889, he was buried in Westminster Abbey close to Alfred Tennyson.

Porphyria's Lover[1]

The rain set early in tonight,
The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
And did its worst to vex the lake:
I listened with heart fit to break.
When glided in Porphyria; straight
She shut the cold out and the storm,
And kneeled and made the cheerless grate
Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;
Which done, she rose, and from her form
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
And laid her soiled gloves by, untied
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
And, last, she sat down by my side
And called me. When no voice replied,
She put my arm about her waist,
And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
And all her yellow hair displaced,
And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,
Murmuring how she loved me—she
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavor,
To set its struggling passion free
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
And give herself to me forever.
But passion sometimes would prevail,
Nor could tonight's gay feast restrain
A sudden thought of one so pale
For love of her, and all in vain:
So, she was come through wind and rain.
Be sure I looked up at her eyes

Happy and proud; at last I knew
Porphyria worshiped me: surprise
Made my heart swell, and still it grew
While I debated what to do.
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
Perfectly pure and good: I found
A thing to do, and all her hair
In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her. No pain felt she;
I am quite sure she felt no pain.
As a shut bud that holds a bee,
I warily oped her lids: again
Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.
And I untightened next the tress
About her neck; her cheek once more
Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:
I propped her head up as before,
Only, this time my shoulder bore
Her head, which droops upon it still:
The smiling rosy little head,
So glad it has its utmost will,
That all it scorned at once is fled,
And I, its love, am gained instead!
Porphyria's love: she guessed not how
Her darling one wish would be heard.
And thus we sit together now,
And all night long we have not stirred,
And yet God has not said a word!

1834 1836, 1842

Endnotes

- Note 1: One of a pair of monologues originally published as "Madhouse Cells," a title that emphasized the speaker's abnormal state of mind.Return to reference 1

Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister

1

Gr-r-r—there go, my heart's abhorrence!
Water your damned flowerpots, do!
If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
God's blood,[1] would not mine kill you!
What? your myrtle bush wants trimming?
Oh, that rose has prior claims—
Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?
Hell dry you up with its flames!

2

At the meal we sit together:
Salve tibi![2] I must hear
Wise talk of the kind of weather,
Sort of season, time of year:
Not a plenteous cork crop: scarcely
Dare we hope oak-galls,[3] I doubt:
What's the Latin name for "parsley"?
What's the Greek name for Swine's Snout?[4]

3

Whew! We'll have our platter burnished,
Laid with care on our own shelf!
With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,
And a goblet for ourself,
Rinsed like something sacrificial
Ere 'tis fit to touch our chaps°

Marked with L. for our initial!
(He-he! There his lily snaps!)

4

Saint, forsooth! While brown Dolores
Squats outside the Convent bank
With Sanchicha, telling stories,
Steeping tresses in the tank,
Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,
—Can't I see his dead eye glow,
Bright as 'twere a Barbary corsair's?[5]
(That is, if he'd let it show!)

5

When he finishes refection,°
Knife and fork he never lays
Cross-wise, to my recollection,
As do I, in Jesu's praise.
I the Trinity illustrate,
Drinking watered orange pulp—
In three sips the Arian[6] frustrate;
While he drains his at one gulp.

6

Oh, those melons? If he's able
We're to have a feast! so nice!
One goes to the Abbot's table,
All of us get each a slice.
How go on your flowers? None double?
Not one fruit-sort can you spy?
Strange!—And I, too, at such trouble,
Keep them close-nipped on the sly!

7

There's a great text in Galatians,[7]
Once you trip on it, entails
Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
One sure, if another fails:
If I trip him just a-dying,
Sure of heaven as sure can be,
Spin him round and send him flying
Off to hell, a Manichee?[8]

8

Or, my scrofulous French novel
On gray paper with blunt type!
Simply glance at it, you grovel
Hand and foot in Belial's° gripe:
If I double down its pages
At the woeful sixteenth print,
When he gathers his greengages,
Ope a sieve and slip it in't?

9

Or, there's Satan!—one might venture
Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
Such a flaw in the indenture
As he'd miss till, past retrieve,
Blasted lay that rose-acacia[9]
We're so proud of! *Hy, Zy, Hine*[1]
'St, there's Vespers![2] *Plena gratiâ*
Ave, Virgo![3] Gr-r-r—you swine!

ca. 1839 1842

Endnotes

- Note 1: An oath (archaic).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Hail to thee! (Latin); that is, "your health!" This and other speeches in italics in this stanza are the words of Brother Lawrence.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Abnormal outgrowths on oak trees, used for tanning.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Dandelion (19th-century use).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Pirate of the Barbary Coast of northern Africa, renowned for fierceness and lechery.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Heretical follower of Arius (256–336 C.E.), who denied the doctrine of the Trinity.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The speaker hopes to obtain Lawrence's damnation by luring him into a heresy when he may prove unable to interpret Galatians in an unswervingly orthodox way. In Galatians 5:15–23 St. Paul specifies an assortment of "works of the flesh" that lead to damnation, which could make up a total of "twenty-nine" (line 51).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A heretic, a follower of Mani (3rd century), Persian religious leader.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The speaker would pledge his own soul to Satan in return for blasting Lawrence and his "rose-acacia," but the pledge would be so cleverly worded that the speaker would not have to pay his debt to Satan. There would be an escape clause ("flaw in the indenture") for himself.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Perhaps the opening of a mysterious curse against Lawrence.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Evening prayers.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Full of grace, Hail, Virgin! (Latin). The speaker's state of mind may be reflected in his mixed-up version of the prayer to Mary: "*Ave, Maria, gratia plena*."Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *jaws*Return to reference °
- °: *dinner*Return to reference °

- °: *the devil's*Return to reference °

My Last Duchess[1]

Ferrara

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's[2] hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat": such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favor at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule

She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse
—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will 't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretense
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck[3] cast in bronze for me!

1842

Endnotes

- Note 1: The poem is based on incidents in the life of Alfonso II, Duke of Ferrara in Italy, whose first wife, Lucrezia, a young woman, died in 1561 after three years of marriage. Following her death, the duke negotiated through an agent to marry a niece of the Count of Tyrol. Browning represents the duke as addressing this agent.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Friar Pandolf, an imaginary painter.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: An unidentified or imaginary sculptor. The Count of Tyrol had his capital at Innsbruck.Return to reference 3

How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix[1]

(16—)

1

I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
"Good speed!" cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;
"Speed!" echoed the wall to us galloping through;
Behind shut the postern,° the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

2

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place;
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique° right,
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

3

'Twas moonset at starting; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;
At Düffeld, 'twas morning as plain as could be;

And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,
So, Joris broke silence with, “Yet there is time!”

4

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one,
To stare through the mist at us galloping past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray:

5

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track;
And one eye’s black intelligence—ever that glance
O’er its white edge at me, his own master, askance!
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which ay and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

6

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, “Stay spur!
Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault’s not in her,
We’ll remember at Aix”—for one heard the quick wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

7

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff;
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!"

8

"How they'll greet us!"—and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup° over, lay dead as a stone;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

9

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack boots, let go belt and all,
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet name, my horse without peer;
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

10

And all I remember is—friends flocking round

As I sat with his head ’twixt my knees on the ground;
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news from Ghent.

ca. 1844 1845

Endnotes

- Note 1: The distance between Ghent, in Flanders, and Aix-la-Chapelle (now Aachen, in Germany) is about one hundred miles. Browning said that the incident, occurring during the wars between Flanders and Spain, was an imaginary one. In 1889 Thomas Edison prepared a cylinder recording of Browning’s recitation of the opening lines of this poem.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *side door*Return to reference °
- °: *spur or pommel*Return to reference °
- °: *rump*Return to reference °

The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church[1]

***Rome,* 15—**

Vanity, saith the preacher, vanity![2]
Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?
Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not! Well—
She, men would have to be your mother once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!
What's done is done, and she is dead beside,
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
And as she died so must we die ourselves,
And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.
Life, how and what is it? As here I lie
In this state chamber, dying by degrees,
Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" Peace, peace seems all.
Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace;
And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know:
—Old Gandolf cozened° me, despite my care;
Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner south
He graced his carrion with,[3] God curse the same!
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence
One sees the pulpit o' the epistle side,[4]
And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,
And up into the aery dome where live
The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk:
And I shall fill my slab of basalt[5] there,
And 'neath my tabernacle[6] take my rest,

With those nine columns round me, two and two,
The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands:
Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse.[7]
—Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,[8]
Put me where I may look at him! True peach,
Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize!
Draw close: that conflagration of my church
—What then? So much was saved if aught were missed!
My sons, ye would not be my death? Go dig
The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,
Drop water gently till the surface sink,
And if ye find . . . Ah God, I know not, I! . . .
Bedded in store of rotten fig leaves soft,
And corded up in a tight olive-frail,[9]
Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli,*[1]
Big as a jew's head cut off at the nape,[2]
Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .
Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
That brave Frascati[3] villa with its bath,
So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,
Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
Ye worship in the Jesu Church[4] so gay,
For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst!
Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:[5]
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?
Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black°—
'Twas ever antique-black I meant! How else
Shall ye contrast my frieze[6] to come beneath?
The bas-relief[7] in bronze ye promised me,
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot° of, and perchance
Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,

Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
And Moses with the tables[8] . . . but I know
Ye mark° me not! What do they whisper thee,
Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah, ye hope
To revel down my villas while I gasp
Bricked o'er with beggar's moldy travertine°
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at!
Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then!
'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve
My bath must needs be left behind, alas!
One block, pure green as a pistachio nut,
There's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—
And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs?
—That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's[9] every word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—
Tully, my masters? Ulpian[1] serves his need!
And then how I shall lie through centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,[2]
And feel the steady candle flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke!
For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,°
And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point,
And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth,[3] drop
Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work:
And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts
Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
About the life before I lived this life,
And this life too, popes, cardinals, and priests,

Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount,[4]
Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,
And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet
—Aha, ELUCESCEBAT[5] quoth our friend?
No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best!
Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.[6]
All *lapis*, all, sons! Else I give the Pope
My villas! Will ye ever eat my heart?
Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
They glitter like your mother's for my soul,
Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,
Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term,[7]
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx[8]
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,
To comfort me on my entablature[9]
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" There, leave me, there!
For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it! Stone—
Gritstone,° a crumble! Clammy squares
which sweat
As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—
And no more *lapis* to delight the world!
Well go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,
But in a row: and, going, turn your backs
—Aye, like departing altar-ministrants,
And leave me in my church, the church for peace,
That I may watch at leisure if he leers—
Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone,
As still he envied me, so fair she was!

1844 1845

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  In "Fra Lippo Lippi" (p. 428), Browning represents the dawn of the Renaissance in Italy, with its fresh zest for human experiences in this world. In this monologue he portrays a later stage of the Renaissance when such worldliness, full-blown, had infected some of the leading clergy of Italy. Browning's portrait of the dying bishop is, however, not primarily a satire against corruption in the church. It is a brilliant exposition of the workings of a mind, a mind that has been conditioned by special historical circumstances. The Victorian historian of art John Ruskin said of this poem:

  > I know of no other piece of modern English, prose or poetry, in which there is so much told, as in these lines, of the Renaissance spirit—its worldliness, inconsistency, pride, hypocrisy, ignorance of itself, love of art, of luxury, and of good Latin. It is nearly all that I have said of the central Renaissance in thirty pages of the *Stones of Venice*, put into as many lines, Browning's also being the antecedent work.

  St. Praxed's Church was named in honor of St. Praxedes, a Roman virgin of the 2nd century who gave her riches to poor Christians. Both the bishop and his predecessor, Gandolf, are imaginary persons.
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare with Ecclesiastes 1:2: "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Bishop Gandolf shrewdly chose a prize spot in the southern corner of the church for his burial place. The tomb that the speaker is ordering will also be inside the church, as was common for important people in this era.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The Epistles of the New Testament are read from the right-hand side of the altar (as one faces it).Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Dark-colored igneous rock.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Stone canopy or tentlike roof, presumably supported by the "nine columns" under which the sculptured effigy of the bishop would lie on the "slab of basalt."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A pulpy mash of fermented grapes from which a strong wine might be poured off.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: An inferior marble that peels in layers.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Basket for holding olives.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Valuable bright blue stone.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Perhaps a reference to the head of John the Baptist, cut off at Salomé's request (Matthew 14:6–11).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Suburb of Rome, used as a resort by wealthy Italians.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Il Gesù, a Jesuit church in Rome. In a chapel in this church the figure of an angel (rather than God) holds a huge lump of lapis lazuli in his hands.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Compare Job 7:6: "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Continuous band of sculpture.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Sculpture in which the figures do not project far from the background surface.Return to reference 7
- Note 8:
  The sculpture would consist of a mixture of pagan and Christian iconography. "Tripod": seat on which the Oracle of Delphi made prophecies. "Thyrsus": a staff twined with ivy that was carried, according to Greek mythology, by Dionysus, god of wine and fertility. "Glory": halo. "Tables": the stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written. Such intermingling of pagan and Christian traditions, characteristic of the Renaissance, had been attacked in 1841 in *Contrasts*, a book on architecture by A. W. Pugin, a Roman Catholic.
  Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 B.C.E.), orator and statesman who was one of the great stylists of classical Latin

prose.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: Late Latin author of legal commentaries (d. 228 C.E.); not a model of good style.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Reference to the doctrine of transubstantiation.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Rich cloth spread over a dead body or coffin.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The bishop is confusing St. Praxed (a woman) with Jesus—an indication that his mind is wandering.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: He was illustrious (Latin); word from Gandolf's epitaph. The bishop considers the form of the verb to be in "gaudy" bad taste (line 78). If the epitaph had been copied from Cicero instead of from Ulpian, the word would have been *elucebat.*Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Compare with Genesis 47:9: "few and evil have the days of the years of my life been."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Statue of Terminus, the Roman god of boundaries, usually represented without arms. "Vizor": part of a helmet, often represented in sculpture.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: An animal that traditionally accompanied Bacchus.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Horizontal platform supporting a statue or an effigy.Return to reference 9

Notes

- °: *cheated*Return to reference °
- °: *black marble*Return to reference °
- °: *know*Return to reference °
- °: *heed*Return to reference °
- °: *Italian limestone*Return to reference °
- °: *bishop's staff*Return to reference °
- °: *coarse sandstone* Return to reference °

Love among the Ruins

1

Where the quiet-colored end of evening smiles,
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half-asleep
Tinkle homeward through the twilight, stray or stop
As they crop—
Was the site once of a city great and gay
(So they say),
Of our country's very capital, its prince
Ages since
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
Peace or war.

2

Now—the country does not even boast a tree,
As you see,
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
From the hills
Intersect and give a name to (else they run
Into one),
Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
Up like fires
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,
Twelve abreast.

3

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass
Never was!
Such a carpet as, this summertime, o'erspreads
And embeds
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
Stock or stone—
Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
Long ago;
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
Struck them tame;
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold
Bought and sold.

4

Now—the single little turret that remains
On the plains,
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
Overscored,
While the patching houseleek's[1] head of blossom winks
Through the chinks—
Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
Sprang sublime,
And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced
As they raced,
And the monarch and his minions and his dames
Viewed the games.

5

And I know, while thus the quiet-colored eve
Smiles to leave

To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece
In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished gray
Melt away—
That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
Waits me there
In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
For the goal,
When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless, dumb
Till I come.

6

But he looked upon the city, every side,
Far and wide,
All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades'
Colonnades,
All the causeys,[2] bridges, aqueducts—and then,
All the men!
When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,
Either hand
On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
Of my face,
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
Each on each.

7

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
South and north,
And they built their gods a brazen° pillar high
As the sky,
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—

Gold, of course.
Oh heart! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns!
Earth’s returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise, and sin!
Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!
Love is best.

1853 1855

Endnotes

- Note 1: Common European plant with petals clustered in the shape of rosettes.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Causeways or roads raised above low ground.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *brass*Return to reference °

"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came"[1]

(*See Edgar's Song in "Lear"*)

1

My first thought was, he lied in every word,
That hoary cripple, with malicious eye
Askance° to watch the working of his lie
On mine, arid mouth scarce able to afford
Suppression of the glee, that pursed and scored
Its edge, at one more victim gained thereby.

2

What else should he be set for, with his staff?
What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare
All travelers who might find him posted there,
And ask the road? I guessed what skull-like laugh
Would break, what crutch 'gin° write my epitaph
For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

3

If at his counsel I should turn aside
Into that ominous tract which, all agree,
Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly
I did turn as he pointed: neither pride
Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,
So much as gladness that some end might be.

4

For, what with my whole world-wide wandering,
What with my search drawn out through years, my hope
Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope
With that obstreperous joy success would bring,
I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring
My heart made, finding failure in its scope.

5

As when a sick man very near to death
Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and end
The tears and takes the farewell of each friend,
And hears one bid the other go, draw breath
Freelier outside ("since all is o'er," he saith,
"And the blow fallen no grieving can amend"),

6

While some discuss if near the other graves
Be room enough for this, and when a day
Suits best for carrying the corpse away,
With care about the banners, scarves and staves:[2]
And still the man hears all, and only craves
He may not shame such tender love and stay.

7

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ
So many times among "The Band"—to wit,
The knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed
Their steps—that just to fail as they, seemed best,
And all the doubt was now—should I be fit?

8

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
That hateful cripple, out of his highway
Into the path he pointed. All the day
Had been a dreary one at best, and dim
Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim
Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.[3]

9

For mark! no sooner was I fairly found
Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,
Than, pausing to throw backward a last view
O'er the safe road, 'twas gone; gray plain all round:
Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.
I might go on; naught else remained to do.

10

So, on I went. I think I never saw
Such starved ignoble nature; nothing throve:
For flowers—as well expect a cedar grove!
But, cockle, spurge,[4] according to their law
Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,
You'd think; a burr had been a treasure trove.

11

No! penury, inertness and grimace,
In some strange sort, were the land's portion.
"See
Or shut your eyes," said Nature peevishly,
"It nothing skills:[5] I cannot help my case;
Tis the Last Judgment's fire must cure this place,

Calcine[6] its clods and set my prisoners free."

12

If there pushed any ragged thistle stalk
Above its mates, the head was chopped; the bents[7]
Were jealous else. What made those holes and rents
In the dock's° harsh swarth leaves, bruised as to balk
All hope of greenness? 'tis a brute must walk
Pashing° their life out, with a brute's intents.

13

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
In leprosy; thin dry blades pricked the mud
Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood.
One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
Stood stupefied, however he came there:
Thrust out past service from the devil's stud!

14

Alive? he might be dead for aught I know,
With that red gaunt and colloped° neck a-strain,
And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane;
Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe;
I never saw a brute I hated so;
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

15

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart.
As a man calls for wine before he fights,
I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights,
Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
Think first, fight afterwards—the soldier's art:
One taste of the old time sets all to rights.

16

Not it! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face
Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
That way he used. Alas, one night's disgrace!
Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

17

Giles then, the soul of honor—there he stands
Frank as ten years ago when knighted first.
What honest man should dare (he said) he durst.
Good—but the scene shifts—faugh! what hangman hands
Pin to his breast a parchment? His own bands
Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and cursed!

18

Better this present than a past like that;
Back therefore to my darkening path again!
No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain.
Will the night send a howlet° or a bat?
I asked: when something on the dismal flat

Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train.

19

A sudden little river crossed my path
As unexpected as a serpent comes.
No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms;
This, as it frothed by, might have been a bath
For the fiend's glowing hoof—to see the wrath
Of its black eddy bespate° with flakes and spumes.

20

So petty yet so spiteful! All along,
Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it;
Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit
Of mute despair, a suicidal throng:
The river which had done them all the wrong,
Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no whit.

21

Which, while I forded—good saints, how I feared
To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,
Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to seek
For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard!
—It may have been a water rat I speared,
But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

22

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.
Now for a better country. Vain presage!

Who were the strugglers, what war did they wage,
Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank
Soil to a plash?° Toads in a poisoned tank,
Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage—

23

The fight must so have seemed in that fell cirque.°
What penned them there, with all the plain to choose?
No footprint leading to that horrid mews,[8]
None out of it. Mad brewage set to work
Their brains, no doubt, like galley slaves the Turk
Pits for his pastime, Christians against Jews.

24

And more than that—a furlong on—why, there!
What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,
Or brake,[9] not wheel—that harrow fit to reel
Men's bodies out like silk? with all the air
Of Tophet's° tool, on earth left unaware,
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.

25

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once a wood,
Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere earth
Desperate and done with; (so a fool finds mirth,
Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood
Changes and off he goes!) within a rood[1]
Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black dearth.

26

Now blotches rankling, colored gay and grim,
Now patches where some leanness of the soil's
Broke into moss or substances like boils;
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him
Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim
Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

27

And just as far as ever from the end!
Naught in the distance but the evening, naught
To point my footstep further! At the thought,
A great black bird, Apollyon's[2] bosom friend,
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned[3]
That brushed my cap—perchance the guide I sought.

28

For, looking up, aware I somehow grew,
'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given place
All round to mountains—with such name to grace
Mere ugly heights and heaps now stolen in view.
How thus they had surprised me—solve it, you!
How to get from them was no clearer case.

29

Yet half I seemed to recognize some trick
Of mischief happened to me, God knows when —
In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended, then,

Progress this way. When, in the very nick
Of giving up, one time more, came a click
As when a trap shuts—you're inside the den!

30

Burningly it came on me all at once,
This was the place! those two hills on the right,
Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight;
While to the left, a tall scalped mountain . . . Dunce,
Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,°
After a life spent training for the sight!

31

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself?
The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,[4]
Built of brown stone, without a counterpart
In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf
Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf
He strikes on, only when the timbers start.°

32

Not see? because of night perhaps?—why, day
Came back again for that! before it left,
The dying sunset kindled through a cleft:
The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay,
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay—
"Now stab and end the creature—to the heft!"[5]

33

Not hear? when noise was everywhere! it tolled
Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears
Of all the lost adventurers my peers—
How such a one was strong, and such was bold,
And such was fortunate, yet each of old
Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe of years.

34

There they stood, ranged along the hillsides, met
To view the last of me, a living frame
For one more picture! in a sheet of flame
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
Dauntless the slug-horn[6] to my lips I set,
And blew. *"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came."*

1852 1855

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Browning stated that this poem "came upon me as a kind of dream," and that it was written in one day. Although the poem was among those of his own writings that pleased him most, he was reluctant to explain what the dream (or nightmare) signified. He once agreed with a friend's suggestion that the meaning might be expressed in the statement: "He that endureth to the end shall be saved" (compare with Matthew 24:13). Most readers have responded to the poem in this way, finding in the story of Roland's quest an inspiring expression of defiance and courage. Other readers find that the poem expresses despair more than enduring hope, and it is at least true that the landscape is as grim and nightmarelike as in 20th-century writings such as T. S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men" (1925) or Franz Kafka's "In the Penal Colony" (1919).

The lines from Shakespeare's *King Lear* 3.4 (lines 158–60), from which the title is taken, are spoken when Lear is about to enter a hovel on the heath, and Edgar, feigning madness, chants the fragment of a song reminiscent of quests and challenges in fairy tales: "Child Roland to the dark tower come, / His word was still, 'Fie, fo, and fum; / I smell the blood of a British man." "Childe": a youth of noble birth, usually a candidate for knighthood.
Return to reference 1

- Note 2: The trappings of an imagined funeral.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Literally, a domestic animal that has strayed away from its home.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A bitter-juiced weed. "Cockle": a weed that bears burrs.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, it is no use.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Turn to powder by heat.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Coarse stiff grasses.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Enclosed stable yard.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A toothed machine used for separating the fibers of flax or hemp; here an instrument of torture.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, a short distance (6–8 yards).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In Revelation 9:11 Apollyon is "the angel of the bottomless pit." In *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) by John Bunyan (1628–1688) he is a hideous "monster"; "he had wings like a dragon."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: With wings or pinions like those of a dragon.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Compare with Psalms 14:1: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Handle of dagger or sword.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The war cry or slogan of a clan about to engage in battle (Scottish). In 1770, however, the poet Thomas Chatterton was misled into using it to mean a kind of trumpet or horn.

Browning followed Chatterton's example, although the original meaning would also be relevant here.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *squinting sideways*Return to reference °
- °: *would begin to*Return to reference °
- °: *coarse plant*Return to reference °
- °: *smashing*Return to reference °
- °: *ridged*Return to reference °
- °: *owl*Return to reference °
- °: *bespattered*Return to reference °
- °: *puddle*Return to reference °
- °: *dreadful arena*Return to reference °
- °: *hell's*Return to reference °
- °: *moment*Return to reference °
- °: *separate; come loose*Return to reference °

Fra Lippo Lippi[1]

I am poor brother Lippo, by your leave!
You need not clap your torches to my face.
Zooks,[2] what's to blame? you think you see a monk!
What, 'tis past midnight, and you go the rounds,
And here you catch me at an alley's end
Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar?
The Carmine's[3] my cloister: hunt it up,
Do—harry out, if you must show your zeal,
Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole,
And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,
Weke, weke, that's crept to keep him company!
Aha, you know your betters! Then, you'll take
Your hand away that's fiddling on my throat,
And please to know me likewise. Who am I?
Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend
Three streets off—he's a certain . . . how d'ye call?
Master—a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,[4]
I' the house that caps the corner. Boh! you were best!
Remember and tell me, the day you're hanged,
How you affected such a gullet's gripe![5]
But you,[6] sir, it concerns you that your knaves
Pick up a manner nor discredit you:
Zooks, are we pilchards,° that they sweep the streets
And count fair prize what comes into this net?
He's Judas to a tittle,° that man is![7]
Just such a face! Why, sir, you make amends.
Lord, I'm not angry! Bid your hangdogs go
Drink out this quarter-florin[8] to the health

Of the munificent House that harbors me
(And many more beside, lads! more beside!)
And all's come square again. I'd like his face—
His, elbowing on his comrade in the door
With the pike and lantern—for the slave that holds
John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair
With one hand ("Look you, now," as who should say)
And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped!
It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,
A wood-coal° or the like? or you should see!
Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.
What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,
You know them and they take you? like enough!
I saw the proper twinkle in your eye—
'Tell you, I liked your looks at very first.
Let's sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch.
Here's spring come, and the nights one makes up bands
To roam the town and sing out carnival,[9]
And I've been three weeks shut within my mew,°
A-painting for the great man, saints and saints
And saints again. I could not paint all night—
Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air.
There came a hurry of feet and little feet,
A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whifts of song—
Flower o' the broom,
Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!
Flower o' the quince,
I let Lisa go, and what good in life since?[1]
Flower o' the thyme—and so on. Round they went.
Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter
Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight—three slim shapes,
And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir, flesh and blood,

That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it went,
Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,
All the bed-furniture—a dozen knots,
There was a ladder! Down I let myself,
Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped,
And after them. I came up with the fun
Hard by° Saint Laurence,[2] hail fellow, well met—
Flower o' the rose,
If I've been merry, what matter who knows!
And so as I was stealing back again
To get to bed and have a bit of sleep
Ere I rise up tomorrow and go work
On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast
With his great round stone to subdue the flesh,[3]
You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see!
Though your eye twinkles still, you shake your head—
Mine's shaved—a monk, you say—the sting's in that!
If Master Cosimo announced himself,
Mum's the word naturally; but a monk!
Come, what am I a beast for? tell us, now!
I was a baby when my mother died
And father died and left me in the street.
I starved there, God knows how, a year or two
On fig skins, melon parings, rinds and shucks,
Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day,
My stomach being empty as your hat,
The wind doubled me up and down I went.
Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand
(Its fellow° was a stinger as I knew),
And so along the wall, over the bridge,
By the straight cut to the convent. Six words there,
While I stood munching my first bread that month:
"So, boy, you're minded," quoth the good fat father

Wiping his own mouth, 'twas refection time°—
"To quit this very miserable world?
Will you renounce" . . . "the mouthful of bread?"
thought I;
By no means! Brief, they made a monk of me;
I did renounce the world, its pride and greed,
Palace, farm, villa, shop, and banking house,
Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici
Have given their hearts to—all at eight years old.
Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,
'Twas not for nothing—the good bellyful,
The warm serge and the rope[4] that goes all round,
And day-long blessed idleness beside!
"Let's see what the urchin's fit for"—that came next.
Not overmuch their way, I must confess.
Such a to-do! They tried me with their books:
Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure waste!
Flower o' the clove,
All the Latin I construe is "amo," I love!
But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets
Eight years together, as my fortune was,
Watching folk's faces to know who will fling
The bit of half-stripped grape bunch he desires,
And who will curse or kick him for his pains—
Which gentleman processional and fine,
Holding a candle to the Sacrament,
Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch
The droppings of the wax to sell again,
Or holla for the Eight° and have him whipped—
How say I?—nay, which dog bites, which lets drop
His bone from the heap of offal in the street—
Why, soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,
He learns the look of things, and none the less
For admonition from the hunger-pinch.
I had a store of such remarks, be sure,

Which, after I found leisure, turned to use.
I drew men's faces on my copybooks,
Scrawled them within the antiphonary's marge,[5]
Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,
Found eyes and nose and chin for A's and B's,
And made a string of pictures of the world
Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,
On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks looked black.
"Nay," quoth the Prior,[6] "turn him out, d' ye say?
In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.
What if at last we get our man of parts,°
We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese
And Preaching Friars,[7] to do our church up fine
And put the front on it that ought to be!"
And hereupon he bade me daub away.
Thank you! my head being crammed, the walls a blank,
Never was such prompt disemburdening.
First, every sort of monk, the black and white,
I drew them, fat and lean: then, folk at church,
From good old gossips waiting to confess
Their cribs° of barrel droppings, candle ends—
To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,
Fresh from his murder, safe[8] and sitting there
With the little children round him in a row
Of admiration, half for his beard and half
For that white anger of his victim's son
Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,
Signing himself with the other because of Christ
(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this
After the passion° of a thousand years)
Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head
(Which the intense eyes looked through), came at eve

On tiptoe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,
Her pair of earrings and a bunch of flowers
(The brute took growling), prayed, and so was gone.
I painted all, then cried " 'Tis ask and have;
Choose, for more's ready!"—laid the ladder flat,
And showed my covered bit of cloister wall.
The monks closed in a circle and praised loud
Till checked, taught what to see and not to see,
Being simple bodies—"That's the very man!
Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog!
That woman's like the Prior's niece who comes
To care about his asthma: it's the life!"
But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and funked;[9]
Their betters took their turn to see and say:
The Prior and the learned pulled a face
And stopped all that in no time. "How? what's here?
Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all!
Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true
As much as pea and pea! it's devil's game!
Your business is not to catch men with show,
With homage to the perishable clay,
But lift them over it, ignore it all,
Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh.
Your business is to paint the souls of men—
Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke . . . no, it's not . . .
It's vapor done up like a newborn babe—
(In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)
It's . . . well, what matters talking, it's the soul!
Give us no more of body than shows soul!
Here's Giotto,[1] with his Saint a-praising God,
That sets us praising—why not stop with him?
Why put all thoughts of praise out of our head
With wonder at lines, colors, and what not?
Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!
Rub all out, try at it a second time.

Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,
She's just° my niece . . . Herodias,[2] I would say—
Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off!
Have it all out!" Now, is this sense, I ask?
A fine way to paint soul, by painting body
So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further
And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white
When what you put for yellow's simply black,
And any sort of meaning looks intense
When all beside itself means and looks naught.
Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,
Left foot and right foot, go a double step,
Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,
Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,
The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so pretty
You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?
Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,
Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
And then add soul and heighten them threefold?
Or say there's beauty with no soul at all—
(I never saw it—put the case the same—)
If you get simple beauty and naught else,
You get about the best thing God invents:
That's somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have missed,
Within yourself, when you return him thanks.
"Rub all out!" Well, well, there's my life, in short,
And so the thing has gone on ever since.
I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken bounds:
You should not take a fellow eight years old
And make him swear to never kiss the girls.
I'm my own master, paint now as I please—
Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house![3]
Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in front—

Those great rings serve more purposes than just
To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse!
And yet the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes
Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,
The heads shake still—"It's art's decline, my son!
You're not of the true painters, great and old;
Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find;
Brother Lorenzo[4] stands his single peer:
Fag on° at flesh, you'll never make the third!"
Flower o' the pine,
You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll stick to mine!
I'm not the third, then: bless us, they must know!
Don't you think they're the likeliest to know,
They with their Latin? So, I swallow my rage,
Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint
To please them—sometimes do and sometimes don't;
For, doing most, there's pretty sure to come
A turn, some warm eve finds me at my saints—
A laugh, a cry, the business of the world—
(Flower o' the peach,
Death for us all, and his own life for each!)
And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs over,
The world and life's too big to pass for a dream,
And I do these wild things in sheer despite,
And play the fooleries you catch me at,
In pure rage! The old mill-horse, out at grass
After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,
Although the miller does not preach to him
The only good of grass is to make chaff.°
What would men have? Do they like grass or no[5]—
May they or mayn't they? all I want's the thing
Settled forever one way. As it is,
You tell too many lies and hurt yourself:

You don’t like what you only like too much,
You do like what, if given you at your word,
You find abundantly detestable.
For me, I think I speak as I was taught;
I always see the garden[6] and God there
A-making man’s wife: and, my lesson learned,
The value and significance of flesh,
I can’t unlearn ten minutes afterwards.

You understand me: I’m a beast, I know.
But see, now—why, I see as certainly
As that the morning star’s about to shine,
What will hap some day. We’ve a youngster here
Comes to our convent, studies what I do,
Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop:
His name is Guidi[7]—he’ll not mind the monks—
They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk—
He picks my practice up—he’ll paint apace,
I hope so—though I never live so long,
I know what’s sure to follow. You be judge!
You speak no Latin more than I, belike;
However, you’re my man, you’ve seen the world
—The beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shapes of things, their colors, lights and shades,
Changes, surprises—and God made it all!
—For what? Do you feel thankful, aye or no,
For this fair town’s face, yonder river’s line,
The mountain round it and the sky above,
Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
These are the frame to? What’s it all about?
To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,
Wondered at? oh, this last of course!—you say.
But why not do as well as say—paint these
Just as they are, careless what comes of it?
God’s works—paint any one, and count it crime

To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works
Are here already; nature is complete:
Suppose you reproduce her—(which you can't)
There's no advantage! You must beat her, then."
For, don't you mark?° we're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
And so they are better, painted—better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now,
Your cullion's° hanging face? A bit of chalk,
And trust me but you should, though! How much more,
If I drew higher things with the same truth!
That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,
Interpret God to all of you! Oh, oh,
It makes me mad to see what men shall do
And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us,
Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good:
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.
"Aye, but you don't so instigate to prayer!"
Strikes in the Prior: "when your meaning's plain
It does not say to folk—remember matins,
Or, mind you fast next Friday!" Why, for this
What need of art at all? A skull and bones,
Two bits of stick nailed crosswise, or, what's best,
A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.
I painted a Saint Laurence[8] six months since
At Prato, splashed the fresco[9] in fine style:
"How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down?"
I ask a brother: "Hugely," he returns—
"Already not one phiz° of your three slaves
Who turn the Deacon off his toasted side,

But it's scratched and prodded to our heart's
content,
The pious people have so eased their own
With coming to say prayers there in a rage:
We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.
Expect another job this time next year,
For pity and religion grow i' the crowd—
Your painting serves its purpose!" Hang the fools!

—That is—you'll not mistake an idle word
Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot,°
Tasting the air this spicy night which turns
The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine!
Oh, the church knows! don't misreport me, now!
It's natural a poor monk out of bounds
Should have his apt word to excuse himself:
And hearken how I plot to make amends.
I have bethought me: I shall paint a piece
. . . There's for you! Give me six months, then go,
see
Something in Sant' Ambrogio's![1] Bless the nuns!
They want a cast o' my office.[2] I shall paint
God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,
Ringed by a bowery flowery angel brood,
Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet
As puff on puff of grated orris-root[3]
When ladies crowd to Church at midsummer.
And then i' the front, of course a saint or two—
Saint John, because he saves the Florentines,
Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and white
The convent's friends and gives them a long day,
And Job,[4] I must have him there past mistake,
The man of Uz (and Us without the z,
Painters who need his patience). Well, all these
Secured at their devotion, up shall come

Out of a corner when you least expect,
As one by a dark stair into a great light,
Music and talking, who but Lippo! I!—
Mazed,° motionless and moonstruck—I'm the man!
Back I shrink—what is this I see and hear?
I, caught up with my monk's things by mistake,
My old serge gown and rope that goes all round,
I, in this presence, this pure company!
Where's a hole, where's a corner for escape?
Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing
Forward, puts out a soft palm—"Not so fast!"
—Addresses the celestial presence, "nay—
He made you and devised you, after all,
Though he's none of you! Could Saint John there draw—
His camel-hair[5] make up a painting-brush?
We come to brother Lippo for all that,
Iste perfecit opus!"[6] So, all smile—
I shuffle sideways with my blushing face
Under the cover of a hundred wings
Thrown like a spread of kirtles° when you're gay
And play hot cockles,[7] all the doors being shut,
Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops
The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off
To some safe bench behind, not letting go
The palm of her, the little lily thing
That spoke the good word for me in the nick,
Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I would say.
And so all's saved for me, and for the church
A pretty picture gained. Go, six months hence!
Your hand, sir, and good-by: no lights, no lights!
The street's hushed, and I know my own way back,
Don't fear me! There's the gray beginning. Zooks!

ca. 1853 1855

Endnotes

- Note 1: This monologue portrays the dawn of the Renaissance in Italy at a point when the medieval attitude toward life and art was about to be displaced by a fresh appreciation of earthly pleasures. It was from Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Painters* (1550) that Browning derived most of his information about the life of the Florentine painter and friar Lippo Lippi (1406–1469), but the theory of art propounded by Lippi in the poem was developed by the poet.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A shortened version of *Gadzooks,* a mild oath now obscure in meaning but perhaps resembling a phrase still in use: "God's truth."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Santa Maria del Carmine, a church and cloister of the Carmelite order of friars to which Lippi belonged.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Lippi's patron, a banker and virtual ruler of Florence (1389–1464).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, how you had the arrogance to choke the gullet of someone with my connections.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The officer in charge of the patrol of policemen or watchmen.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, one of the watchmen has a face that would serve as a model for a painting of Judas.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That is, buy a drink worth a quarter of a florin (the florin was a gold coin first minted in Florence).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Season of revelry before the commencement of Lent.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: This and other interspersed flower songs are called *stornelli* in Italy.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: San Lorenzo, a church in Florence. Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A picture of Saint Jerome (ca. 340–420), whose ascetic observances were hardly a congenial subject for a painter such as Lippi.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The material ("serge") and belt ("rope") of a monk's clothing.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Margin of a music book used for choral singing.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Head of a Carmelite convent.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Benedictine and Dominican religious orders, respectively.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Having claimed sanctuary in the church.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Went up in smoke.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Great Florentine painter (1276–1337) whose stylized pictures of religious subjects were admired as models of pre-Renaissance art.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, Salomé (her mother was Herodias, the sister-in-law of King Herod). Because John the Baptist had aroused her mother's displeasure, Salomé asked for his head on a platter after she danced (Matthew 14:6–11).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The Medici palace.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Fra Angelico (1387–1455) and Lorenzo Monaco (1370–1425), whose paintings were in the approved traditional manner.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, while horses are allowed to enjoy playing in the grass, human beings are taught by the Church that physical experience is valuable only in its relation to their future condition in the afterlife. The biblical text "all flesh is as grass" (1 Peter 1:24) lurks within Lippi's question.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, Eden.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Guidi or Masaccio (1401–1428), a painter who may have been Lippi's master rather than his pupil, although Browning, in a letter to the press in 1870, argued that Lippi had been born earlier. Like Lippi, Masaccio was in revolt against the medieval theory of art. His frescoes in the chapel of Santa Maria del Carmine are considered his masterpiece.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A scene representing the fiery martyrdom of St. Laurence (or Lawrence).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Painted on a freshly plastered surface. It must be painted quickly before the plaster dries. Prato is a town near

Florence.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: A convent church in Florence.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Sample of my work. The completed painting, which Browning saw in Florence, is Lippi's *Coronation of the Virgin* (1441).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A powder (like talcum) made from sweet-smelling roots of a flower.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The prosperous man who endured immense suffering without once questioning God's will (see the book of Job).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Compare with Mark 1:6: "And John was clothed with camel's hair."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: This man made the work! (Latin). In this painting, as later completed, these words appear beside a figure that Browning took to be Lippi's self-portrait.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A game in which a player wears a blindfold.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *small fish*Return to reference °
- °: *to a tee*Return to reference °
- °: *piece of charcoal*Return to reference °
- °: *private den*Return to reference °
- °: *next to*Return to reference °
- °: *her other hand*Return to reference °
- °: *mealtime*Return to reference °
- °: *Florentine magistrates*Return to reference °
- °: *skill, genius*Return to reference °
- °: *petty thefts*Return to reference °
- °: *sufferings*Return to reference °
- °: *exactly like*Return to reference °
- °: *work hard*Return to reference °
- °: *straw*Return to reference °
- °: *observe*Return to reference °

- °: *rascal's* Return to reference °
- °: *face* Return to reference °
- °: *knows* Return to reference °
- °: *confused* Return to reference °
- °: *skirts* Return to reference °

Andrea del Sarto[1]

(*called "The Faultless Painter"*)

But do not let us quarrel any more,
No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?
I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,
Treat his own subject after his own way,
Fix his own time, accept too his own price,
And shut the money into this small hand
When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly?
Oh, I'll content him—but tomorrow, Love!
I often am much wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual, and it seems
As if—forgive now—should you let me sit
Here by the window with your hand in mine
And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole,[2]
Both of one mind, as married people use,°
Quietly, quietly the evening through,
I might get up tomorrow to my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
Tomorrow, how you shall be glad for this!
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.
Don't count the time lost, neither; you must serve
For each of the five pictures we require:
It saves° a model. So! keep looking so—
My serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds![3]
—How could you ever prick those perfect ears,
Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet—

My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
Which everybody looks on and calls his,
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
While she looks—no one's: very dear, no less.[4]
You smile? why, there's my picture ready made,
There's what we painters call our harmony!
A common grayness silvers everything[5]—
All in a twilight, you and I alike
—You, at the point of your first pride in me
(That's gone you know)—but I, at every point;
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
There's the bell clinking from the chapel top;
That length of convent wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;
The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease,
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do,
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead;
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!
I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!
This chamber for example—turn your head—
All that's behind us! You don't understand
Nor care to understand about my art,
But you can hear at least when people speak:
And that cartoon,° the second from the door
—It is the thing, Love! so such things should be—
Behold Madonna!—I am bold to say.
I can do with my pencil what I know,
What I see, what at bottom of my heart
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
Do easily, too—when I say, perfectly,

I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge,
Who listened to the Legate's[6] talk last week,
And just as much they used to say in France.
At any rate 'tis easy, all of it!
No sketches first, no studies, that's long past:
I do what many dream of, all their lives,
—Dream? strive to do, and agonize to do,
And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
Who strive—you don't know how the others strive
To paint a little thing like that you smeared
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat—
Yet do much less, so much less, Someone[7] says
(I know his name, no matter)—so much less!
Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged.
There burns a truer light of God in them,
In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain,
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
Enter and take their place there sure enough,
Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
The sudden blood of these men! at a word—
Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
I, painting from myself and to myself,
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
Morello's[8] outline there is wrongly traced,
His hue mistaken; what of that? or else,
Rightly traced and well ordered; what of that?
Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?
Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,

Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-gray
Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!
I know both what I want and what might gain,
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
"Had I been two, another and myself,
Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No doubt.
Yonder's a work now, of that famous youth
The Urbinate[9] who died five years ago.
('Tis copied,[1] George Vasari sent it me.)
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,
Above and through his art—for it gives way;
That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,
He means right—that, a child may understand.
Still, what an arm! and I could alter it:
But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
Out of me, out of me! And wherefore out?
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you!
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think—
More than I merit, yes, by many times.
But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
The fowler's pipe,[2] and follows to the snare—
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
"God and the glory! never care for gain.
The present by the future, what is that?
Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo![°]
Rafael is waiting: up to God, all three!"

I might have done it for you. So it seems:
Perhaps not. All is as God overrules.
Beside, incentives come from the soul's self;
The rest avail not. Why do I need you?
What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo?
In this world, who can do a thing, will not;
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive:
Yet the will's somewhat°—somewhat, too, the power
—
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,
That I am something underrated here.
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.
I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
The best is when they pass and look aside;
But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.
Well may they speak! That Francis,[3] that first time,
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau!
I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
In that humane great monarch's golden look—
One finger in his beard or twisted curl
Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
I painting proudly with his breath on me,
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts—
And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
This in the background, waiting on my work,
To crown the issue with a last reward!
A good time, was it not, my kingly days?

And had you not grown restless . . . but I know—
'Tis done and past; 'twas right, my instinct said;
Too live the life grew, golden and not gray,
And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
Out of the grange° whose four walls make his world.
How could it end in any other way?
You called me, and I came home to your heart.
The triumph was—to reach and stay there; since
I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?
Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold,
You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!
"Rafael did this, Andrea painted that;
The Roman's is the better when you pray,
But still the other's Virgin was his wife—"
Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge
Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows
My better fortune, I resolve to think.
For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
Said one day Agnolo, his very self,
To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . .
(When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
Upon a palace wall for Rome to see,
Too lifted up in heart because of it)
"Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub
Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how,
Who, were he set to plan and execute
As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,
Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!"
To Rafael's—And indeed the arm is wrong.
I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see,
Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go!
Aye, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out!
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
(What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo?
Do you forget already words like those?)
If really there was such a chance, so lost—

Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more pleased.
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!
This hour has been an hour! Another smile?
If you would sit thus by me every night
I should work better, do you comprehend?
I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star;
Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
The cue-owls[4] speak the name we call them by.
Come from the window, love—come in, at last,
Inside the melancholy little house
We built to be so gay with. God is just.
King Francis may forgive me: oft at nights
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
The walls become illumined, brick from brick
Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
That gold of his I did cement them with!
Let us but love each other. Must you go?
That Cousin here again? he waits outside?
Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans?
More gaming debts to pay?[5] you smiled for that?
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?
While hand and eye and something of a heart
Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth?
I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
The gray remainder of the evening out,
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
How I could paint, were I but back in France,
One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face,
Not yours this time! I want you at my side
To hear them—that is, Michel Agnolo—
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
Will you? Tomorrow, satisfy your friend.
I take the subjects for his corridor,
Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,

And throw him in another thing or two
If he demurs; the whole should prove enough
To pay for this same Cousin's freak.° Beside,
What's better and what's all I care about,
Get you the thirteen scudi° for the ruff!
Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,
The Cousin! What does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age tonight.
I regret little, I would change still less.
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
The very wrong to Francis!—it is true
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
My father and my mother died of want.[6]
Well, had I riches of my own? you see
How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.
They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:
And I have labored somewhat in my time
And not been paid profusely. Some good son
Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try!
No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,
You loved me quite enough, it seems tonight.
This must suffice me here. What would one have?
In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance
—
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,[7]
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,°
For Leonard,[8] Rafael, Agnolo and me
To cover—the three first without a wife,
While I have mine! So—still they overcome
Because there's still Lucrezia—as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

ca. 1853 1855

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  This portrait of Andrea del Sarto (1486–1531) was derived from a biography written by his pupil Giorgio Vasari, author of *The Lives of the Painters* (1550). Vasari's account seeks to explain why his Florentine master, one of the most skillful painters of the Renaissance, never altogether fulfilled the promise he had shown early in his career and why he had never arrived (in Vasari's opinion) at the level of such artists as Raphael. Vasari noted that Andrea suffered from "a certain timidity of mind . . . which rendered it impossible that those evidences of ardor and animation, which are proper to the more exalted character, should ever appear in him."

  Browning also follows Vasari's account of Andrea's marriage to a beautiful widow, Lucrezia, "an artful woman who made him do as she pleased in all things." Vasari reports that Andrea's "immoderate love for her soon caused him to neglect the studies demanded by his art" and that this infatuation had "more influence over him than the glory and honor towards which he had begun to make such hopeful advances."
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A suburb on the hills overlooking Florence.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Coils of hair like the coils of a serpent.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Her affections are centered on no one person, not even on her husband, yet she is nevertheless dear to him.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The predominant color in many of Andrea's paintings is silver gray.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A deputy of the pope.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Probably the artist Michelangelo (1475–1564).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A mountain peak outside Florence.Return to reference 8

- Note 9: Raphael (1483–1520), or Raffaello Sanzio, born at Urbino.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In saying that the painting is a copy, Andrea may perhaps be concerned to prevent Lucrezia from selling it.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Whistle or call used by hunters to lure wild fowl into range.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: King Francis I of France (1494–1547; reigned 1515–47) had invited Andrea to his court at Fontainebleau and warmly encouraged him in his painting. On returning to Florence, however, Andrea is reputed to have stolen some funds entrusted to him by Francis; and to please Lucrezia he built a house with the money. Now he is afraid of being insulted by "Paris lords" on the streets.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Scops owls; the term is Browning's coinage from the Italian *chiù* or *ciù*, a name that imitates their cry.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Lucrezia's "Cousin" (or lover or friend) owes gambling debts to a creditor. Andrea has already contracted (lines 5–10) to pay off these debts by painting some pictures according to the creditor's specifications. Now he agrees to pay off further debts.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: According to Vasari, Andrea's infatuation with Lucrezia prompted him to stop supporting his poverty-stricken parents.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: See Revelation 21:10–21, which gives a description of "that great city, the holy Jerusalem."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519).Return to reference 8

Notes

- °: *usually are*Return to reference °
- °: *saves the expense of*Return to reference °
- °: *drawing*Return to reference °
- °: *Michelangelo*Return to reference °

- °: *of some importance* Return to reference °
- °: *farmhouse* Return to reference °
- °: *whim* Return to reference °
- °: *Italian coins* Return to reference °
- °: *measuring rod* Return to reference °

Caliban upon Setebos Shakespeare's *Tempest* (1610–11) provided Browning with the idea for his speaker (Caliban is a half-man, half-beast, enslaved by Prospero) and the subject of his musings (Setebos is briefly referred to in the play as the god of Caliban's mother, the witch Sycorax). From these beginnings Browning wrote a poem that reflects on two closely related controversies of the Victorian period. The first concerned the nature of God and God's responsibility for the existence of pain in the world. The second debate, stimulated by the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), focused on humanity's origins and our relation to other beings.

Caliban upon Setebos is a particularly challenging poem by a sometimes difficult writer, who often employs racist depictions of Caliban. In terms of grammar, it is worth noting that Caliban uses the third-person pronoun to refer to himself. Thus " 'Will sprawl" means "Caliban will sprawl" (an apostrophe before the verb usually indicates that Caliban is the implied subject). Setebos is also referred to in the third person but with an initial capital letter ("He").

Caliban upon Setebos

Or Natural Theology in the Island

"Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself."[1]

['Will sprawl, now that the heat of day is best,
Flat on his belly in the pit's much mire,
With elbows wide, fists clenched to prop his chin.
And, while he kicks both feet in the cool slush,
And feels about his spine small eft-things°
Run in and out each arm, and make him laugh:
And while above his head a pompion° plant,
Coating the cave-top as a brow its eye,
Creeps down to touch and tickle hair and beard,
And now a flower drops with a bee inside,
And now a fruit to snap at, catch and crunch—
He looks out o'er yon sea which sunbeams cross
And recross till they weave a spider web
(Meshes of fire, some great fish breaks at times)
And talks to his own self, howe'er he please,
Touching that other, whom his dam° called God.
Because to talk about Him, vexes—ha,
Could He but know! and time to vex is now,
When talk is safer than in wintertime.
Moreover Prosper and Miranda[2] sleep
In confidence he drudges at their task,
And it is good to cheat the pair, and gibe,°
Letting the rank tongue blossom into speech.]

Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos!
'Thinketh, He dwelleth i' the cold o' the moon.

'Thinketh He made it, with the sun to match,
But not the stars; the stars came otherwise;
Only made clouds, winds, meteors, such as that:
Also this isle, what lives and grows thereon,
And snaky sea which rounds and ends the same.

'Thinketh, it came of being ill at ease:
He hated that He cannot change His cold,
Nor cure its ache. 'Hath spied an icy fish
That longed to 'scape the rock-stream where she lived,
And thaw herself within the lukewarm brine
O' the lazy sea her stream thrusts far amid,
A crystal spike 'twixt two warm walls of wave;[3]
Only, she ever sickened, found repulse
At the other kind of water, not her life,
(Green-dense and dim-delicious, bred o' the sun)
Flounced back from bliss she was not born to breathe,
And in her old bounds buried her despair,
Hating and loving warmth alike: so He.

'Thinketh, He made thereat the sun, this isle,
Trees and the fowls here, beast and creeping thing.
Yon otter, sleek-wet, black, lithe as a leech;
Yon auk,° one fire-eye in a ball of foam,
That floats and feeds; a certain badger brown
He hath watched hunt with that slant white-wedge eye
By moonlight; and the pie° with the long tongue
That pricks deep into oakwarts for a worm,
And says a plain word when she finds her prize,
But will not eat the ants; the ants themselves
That build a wall of seeds and settled stalks
About their hole—He made all these and more,

Made all we see, and us, in spite: how else?
He could not, Himself, make a second self
To be His mate; as well have made Himself:
He would not make what he mislikes or slights,
An eyesore to Him, or not worth His pains:
But did, in envy, listlessness, or sport,
Make what Himself would fain,° in a manner, be—
Weaker in most points, stronger in a few,
Worthy, and yet mere playthings all the while,
Things He admires and mocks too—that is it.
Because, so brave, so better though they be,
It nothing skills if He begin to plague.[4]
Look now, I melt a gourd-fruit into mash,
Add honeycomb and pods, I have perceived,
Which bite like finches when they bill and kiss—
Then, when froth rises bladdery,° drink up all,
Quick, quick, till maggots scamper through my brain;
Last, throw me on my back i' the seeded thyme,
And wanton, wishing I were born a bird.
Put case, unable to be what I wish,
I yet could make a live bird out of clay:
Would not I take clay, pinch my Caliban
Able to fly?—for, there, see, he hath wings,
And great comb like the hoopoe's[5] to admire,
And there, a sting to do his foes offense,
There, and I will that he begin to live,
Fly to yon rock-top, nip me off the horns
Of griggs° high up that make the merry din,
Saucy through their veined wings, and mind me not.
In which feat, if his leg snapped, brittle clay,
And he lay stupid-like—why, I should laugh;
And if he, spying me, should fall to weep,
Beseech me to be good, repair his wrong,
Bid his poor leg smart less or grow again—
Well, as the chance were, this might take or else

Not take my fancy: I might hear his cry,
And give the mankin° three sound legs for one,
Or pluck the other off, leave him like an egg,
And lessoned° he was mine and merely clay.
Were this no pleasure, lying in the thyme,
Drinking the mash, with brain become alive,
Making and marring clay at will? So He.
'Thinketh, such shows nor right nor wrong in Him,
Nor kind, nor cruel: He is strong and Lord.
'Am strong myself compared to yonder crabs
That march now from the mountain to the sea;
'Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-first,
Loving not, hating not, just choosing so.
'Say, the first straggler that boasts purple spots
Shall join the file, one pincer twisted off;
'Say, this bruised fellow shall receive a worm,
And two worms he whose nippers end in red;
As it likes me each time, I do: so He.

Well then, 'supposeth He is good i' the main,
Placable if His mind and ways were guessed,
But rougher than His handiwork, be sure!
Oh, He hath made things worthier than Himself,
And envieth that, so helped, such things do more
Than He who made them! What consoles but this?
That they, unless through Him, do naught at all,
And must submit: what other use in things?
'Hath cut a pipe of pithless elder-joint
That, blown through, gives exact the scream o' the jay
When from her wing you twitch the feathers blue:
Sound this, and little birds that hate the jay
Flock within stone's throw, glad their foe is hurt:
Put case such pipe could prattle and boast forsooth,
"I catch the birds, I am the crafty thing,
I make the cry my maker cannot make

With his great round mouth; he must blow through mine!”
Would not I smash it with my foot? So He.

But wherefore rough, why cold and ill at ease?
Aha, that is a question! Ask, for that,
What knows—the something over Setebos
That made Him, or He, may be, found and fought,
Worsted, drove off and did to nothing,[6] perchance.
There may be something quiet o’er His head,
Out of His reach, that feels nor° joy nor grief,
Since both derive from weakness in some way.
I joy because the quails come; would not joy
Could I bring quails here when I have a mind:
This Quiet, all it hath a mind to, doth.
’Esteemeth° stars the outposts of its couch,
But never spends much thought nor care that way.
It may look up, work up—the worse for those
It works on! ’Careth but for Setebos[7]
The many-handed as a cuttlefish,
Who, making Himself feared through what He does,
Looks up, first, and perceives he cannot soar
To what is quiet and hath happy life;
Next looks down here, and out of very spite
Makes this a bauble-world to ape yon real,
These good things to match those as hips[8] do grapes.
’Tis solace making baubles, aye, and sport.
Himself peeped late, eyed Prosper at his books
Careless and lofty, lord now of the isle:
Vexed, ’stitched a book of broad leaves, arrow-shaped,
Wrote thereon, he knows what, prodigious words;
Has peeled a wand and called it by a name;
Weareth at whiles for an enchanter’s robe

The eyed skin of a supple oncelot;[9]
And hath an ounce[1] sleeker than youngling mole,
A four-legged serpent he makes cower and couch,
Now snarl, now hold its breath and mind his eye,
And saith she is Miranda and my wife:
'Keeps for his Ariel[2] a tall pouch-bill crane
He bids go wade for fish and straight° disgorge;
Also a sea beast, lumpish, which he snared,
Blinded the eyes of, and brought somewhat tame,
And split its toe-webs, and now pens the drudge
In a hole o' the rock and calls him Caliban;
A bitter heart that bides its time and bites.
'Plays thus at being Prosper in a way,
Taketh his mirth with make-believes: so He.
His dam held that the Quiet made all things
Which Setebos vexed only: 'holds not so.
Who made them weak, meant weakness He might vex.
Had He meant other, while His hand was in,
Why not make horny eyes no thorn could prick,
Or plate my scalp with bone against the snow,
Or overscale my flesh 'neath joint and joint,
Like an orc's° armor? Aye—so spoil His sport!
He is the One now: only He doth all.

'Saith, He may like, perchance, what profits Him.
Aye, himself loves what does him good; but why?
'Gets good no otherwise. This blinded beast
Loves whoso places flesh-meat on his nose,
But, had he eyes, would want no help, but hate
Or love, just as it liked him: He hath eyes.
Also it pleaseth Setebos to work,
Use all His hands, and exercise much craft,
By no means for the love of what is worked.
'Tasteth, himself, no finer good i' the world

When all goes right, in this safe summertime,
And he wants little, hungers, aches not much,
Than trying what to do with wit and strength.
'Falls to make something: 'piled yon pile of turfs,
And squared and stuck there squares of soft white chalk,
And, with a fish-tooth, scratched a moon on each,
And set up endwise certain spikes of tree,
And crowned the whole with a sloth's skull a-top,
Found dead i' the woods, too hard for one to kill.
No use at all i' the work, for work's sole sake;
'Shall some day knock it down again: so He.

'Saith He is terrible: watch His feats in proof!
One hurricane will spoil six good months' hope.
He hath a spite against me, that I know,
Just as He favors Prosper, who knows why?
So it is, all the same, as well I find.
'Wove wattles half the winter, fenced them firm
With stone and stake to stop she-tortoises
Crawling to lay their eggs here: well, one wave,
Feeling the foot of Him upon its neck,
Gaped as a snake does, lolled out its large tongue,
And licked the whole labor flat; so much for spite.
'Saw a ball° flame down late (yonder it lies)
Where, half an hour before, I slept i' the shade:
Often they scatter sparkles: there is force!
'Dug up a newt He may have envied once
And turned to stone, shut up inside a stone.
Please Him and hinder this?—What Prosper does?[3]
Aha, if He would tell me how! Not He!
There is the sport: discover how or die!
All need not die, for of the things o' the isle
Some flee afar, some dive, some run up trees;
Those at His mercy—why, they please Him most

When . . . when . . . well, never try the same way twice!
Repeat what act has pleased, He may grow wroth.
You must not know His ways, and play Him off,
Sure of the issue.° ’Doth the like himself:
’Spareth a squirrel that it nothing fears
But steals[4] the nut from underneath my thumb,
And when I threat, bites stoutly in defense:
’Spareth an urchin° that contrariwise
Curls up into a ball, pretending death
For fright at my approach: the two ways please.
But what would move my choler more than this,
That either creature counted on its life
Tomorrow and next day and all days to come,
Saying, forsooth, in the inmost of its heart,
“Because he did so yesterday with me,
And otherwise with such another brute,
So must he do henceforth and always.”—Aye?
Would teach the reasoning couple what “must” means!
’Doth as he likes, or wherefore Lord? So He.

’Conceiveth all things will continue thus,
And we shall have to live in fear of Him
So long as He lives, keeps His strength: no change,
If He have done His best, make no new world
To please Him more, so leave off watching this—
If He surprise not even the Quiet’s self
Some strange day—or, suppose, grow into it
As grubs grow butterflies: else, here are we,
And there is He, and nowhere help at all.
’Believeth with the life, the pain shall stop.
His dam held different, that after death
He both plagued enemies and feasted friends:
Idly![5] He doth His worst in this our life,

Giving just respite lest we die through pain,
Saving last pain for worst—with which, an end.
Meanwhile, the best way to escape His ire
Is, not to seem too happy. 'Sees, himself,
Yonder two flies, with purple films and pink,
Bask on the pompion° -bell above: kills both.
'Sees two black painful beetles roll their ball
On head and tail as if to save their lives:
Moves them the stick away they strive to clear.

Even so, 'would have Him misconceive, suppose
This Caliban strives hard and ails no less,
And always, above all else, envies Him;
Wherefore he mainly dances on dark nights,
Moans in the sun, gets under holes to laugh,
And never speaks his mind save housed as now:
Outside, 'groans, curses. If He caught me here,
O'erheard this speech, and asked "What chucklest at?"
'Would, to appease Him, cut a finger off,
Or of my three kid yearlings burn the best,
Or let the toothsome apples rot on tree,
Or push my tame beast for the orc to taste:
While myself lit a fire, and made a song
And sung it, *"What I hate, be consecrate*
To celebrate Thee and Thy state, no mate
For Thee; what see for envy in poor me?"
Hoping the while, since evils sometimes mend,
Warts rub away and sores are cured with slime,
That some strange day, will either the Quiet catch
And conquer Setebos, or likelier He
Decrepit may doze, doze, as good as die.

[What, what? A curtain o'er the world at once!
Crickets stop hissing; not a bird—or, yes,

There scuds His raven[6] that has told Him all!
It was fool's play this prattling! Ha! The wind
Shoulders the pillared dust, death's house o' the move,[7]
And fast invading fires begin! White blaze—
A tree's head snaps—and there, there, there, there, there,
His thunder follows! Fool to gibe at Him!
Lo! 'Lieth flat and loveth Setebos!
'Maketh his teeth meet through his upper lip,
Will let those quails fly, will not eat this month
One little mess of whelks,° so he may 'scape!]

ca. 1860 1864

Endnotes

- Note 1: Psalms 50:21. The speaker is God.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Prospero's daughter.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, the thin stream of cold water that is driven into the warm ocean like a spike between walls.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, the superior virtues of Setebos's creatures are no help to them if he decides to torture them.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Bird with bright plumage.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: "Did to nothing": completely overcame.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Caliban's concern is to appease only Setebos, not the other deity—the Quiet.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Hard fruits produced by some roses.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Browning may have invented this term from the Spanish *oncela* or from the French *ocelot* (that is, a leopard or spotted wildcat).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A lynx or other wild feline of moderate size or a snow leopard.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: In *The Tempest* a spirit who serves Prospero.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, shall I please Setebos, as Prospero does, and thus prevent my being punished as the newt was punished? Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, the squirrel that is fearless enough to steal.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, Caliban thinks his mother's opinion was wrong or idle. Setebos's sport with his creatures is confined to this world: there is no afterlife.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In Norse mythology ravens brought the daily news to Odin, the most powerful god.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The whirlwind stirs up a column of dust that Caliban associates with a house of death.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *water lizards*Return to reference °
- °: *pumpkin*Return to reference °
- °: *mother*Return to reference °
- °: *insult them*Return to reference °
- °: *seabird*Return to reference °
- °: *magpie*Return to reference °
- °: *gladly*Return to reference °
- °: *bubbly*Return to reference °
- °: *grasshoppers*Return to reference °
- °: *little man*Return to reference °
- °: *thus taught*Return to reference °
- °: *neither*Return to reference °
- °: *he believes*Return to reference °
- °: *immediately*Return to reference °
- °: *sea monster's*Return to reference °
- °: *meteorite*Return to reference °
- °: *outcome*Return to reference °
- °: *hedgehog*Return to reference °

- °: *pumpkin*Return to reference °
- °: *shellfish*Return to reference °

Rabbi Ben Ezra[1]

1

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith, "A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all nor be afraid!"

2

Not that, amassing flowers,
Youth sighed, "Which rose make ours,
Which lily leave and then as best recall?"
Not that, admiring stars,
It yearned, "Nor Jove, nor Mars;
Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends them all!"

3

Not for such hopes and fears
Annulling youth's brief years,
Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!
Rather I prize the doubt
Low kinds exist without,
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

4

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast:
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men;
Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?[2]

5

Rejoice we are allied
To That which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe.

6

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe![°]

7

For thence—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks—
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me:

A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

8

What is he but a brute
Whose flesh has soul to suit,
Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play?
To man, propose this test—
Thy body at its best,
How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?

9

Yet gifts should prove their use:
I own the Past profuse
Of power each side, perfection every turn:
Eyes, ears took in their dole,
Brain treasured up the whole;
Should not the heart beat once, "How good to live and learn"?

10

Not once beat, "Praise be Thine!
I see the whole design,
I, who saw power, see now love perfect too:
Perfect I call Thy plan:
Thanks that I was a man!
Maker, remake, complete—I trust what Thou shalt do!"

11

For pleasant is this flesh;

Our soul, in its rose-mesh[3]
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest;
Would we some prize might hold
To match those manifold
Possessions of the brute—gain most, as we did best!

12

Let us not always say,
"Spite of this flesh today
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry, "All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

13

Therefore I summon age
To grant youth's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its term:
Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute; a god though in the germ.

14

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone
Once more on my adventure brave and new;[4]
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armor to indue.°

15

Youth ended, I shall try
My gain or loss thereby;
Leave the fire ashes,[5] what survives is gold:
And I shall weigh the same,
Give life its praise or blame:
Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old.

16

For note, when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the gray:
A whisper from the west
Shoots—"Add this to the rest,
Take it and try its worth: here dies another day."

17

So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
"This rage was right i' the main,
That acquiescence vain:
The Future I may face now I have proved the Past."

18

For more is not reserved
To man, with soul just nerved
To act tomorrow what he learns today:
Here, work enough to watch
The Master work, and catch
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

19

As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught found made:
So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt°
Further. Thou waitedst age: wait death nor° be afraid!

20

Enough now, if the Right
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own,
With knowledge absolute,
Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.

21

Be there, for once and all,
Severed great minds from small,
Announced to each his station in the Past!
Was I, the world arraigned,[6]
Were they, my soul disdained,
Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last!

22

Now, who shall arbitrate?
Ten men love what I hate,
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;

Ten, who in ears and eyes
Match me: we all surmise,
They this thing, and I that: whom shall my soul
believe?

23

Not on the vulgar° mass
Called "work," must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

24

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,[7]
So passed in making up the main account;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's
amount:

25

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher
shaped.[8]

26

Aye, note that Potter's wheel,
That metaphor! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay—
Thou, to whom fools propound,[9]
When the wine makes its round,
"Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize today!"

27

Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be:
Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

28

He fixed thee 'mid this dance
Of plastic° circumstance,
This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest:[1]
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

29

What though the earlier grooves
Which ran the laughing loves[2]
Around thy base,[3] no longer pause and press?
What though, about thy rim,
Skull-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

30

Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash, and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips a-glow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what need'st thou with earth's wheel?

31

But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who moldest men;
And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
Did I—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colors rife,
Bound dizzily—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst:

32

So, take and use Thy work:
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times be in Thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

ca. 1862 1864

Endnotes

- Note 1: The speaker, Abraham Ibn Ezra (ca. 1092–1167), was an eminent biblical scholar of Spain, but Browning makes little attempt to present him as a distinct individual or to relate him to the age in which he lived. Unlike the more characteristic

monologues, “Rabbi Ben Ezra” presents a meditation on a theme, not an individual in the grip of a dramatic situation.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: That is, does care disturb a bird whose gullet (“crop”) is full of food? Does doubt trouble an animal whose stomach (“maw”) is full?Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The body, which holds the soul in its net.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In the next life.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: If the fire leaves ashes.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, was I, whom the world arraigned.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Allusion to a merchant or buyer feeling fabric to determine its price or value.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The speaker’s highest qualities of soul were shaped on a potting wheel into an enduring “pitcher” or vessel by God. Compare with Isaiah 64:8: “Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.”Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Perhaps addressed to the Persian philosopher Omar Khayyám (1048–1131), whose poem, *The Rubáiyát,* urged men to eat, drink, and be merry.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, you would be glad to stop (“arrest”) time at this present point of your life.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: May refer to figures of cherublike boys, often featured in Renaissance art.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Of the clay pitcher.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *anguish*Return to reference °
- °: *put on*Return to reference °
- °: *attempt*Return to reference °
- °: *and do not*Return to reference °
- °: *common*Return to reference °

- °: *molded*Return to reference °

EMILY BRONTË
1818–1848

Emily Brontë spent most of her life in a stone parsonage in the small village of Haworth on the wild and bleak Yorkshire moors. She was the fifth of Patrick and Maria Brontë's six children. Her father was a clergyman; her mother died when she was three. At the age of six, she was sent away to a school for the daughters of poor clergy with her three elder sisters; within a year, the two oldest girls had died, in part the result of the school's harsh and unhealthy conditions, which Charlotte Brontë was later to portray in *Jane Eyre* (1847). Mr. Brontë brought Charlotte and Emily home and, together with their brother Branwell and younger sister Anne, educated them himself. Emily was the most reclusive and private of the children; she shunned the company of those outside her family and suffered acutely from homesickness in her few short stays away from the parsonage.

Despite the isolation of Haworth, the Brontë family shared a rich literary life. Mr. Brontë discussed poetry, history, and politics with his children, and the children themselves created an extraordinary fantasy world together. When Mr. Brontë gave Branwell a box of wooden soldiers, each child excitedly seized one and named it. The soldiers became for them the center of an increasingly elaborate set of stories that they first acted out in plays and later recorded in a series of book-length manuscripts, composed for the most part by Charlotte and Branwell. The two younger children, Emily and Anne,

later started a separate series, a chronicle about an imaginary island called Gondal.

In 1850 Charlotte Brontë told the story of how she and her sisters came to write for publication. One day when she accidentally came upon a manuscript volume of verse in Emily's handwriting, she was struck by the conviction "that these were not common effusions, nor at all like the poetry women generally write." With some difficulty, Charlotte persuaded her intensely private sister to publish some of her poems in a selection of poetry by all three Brontë sisters. Averse to personal publicity and afraid that "authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice," Charlotte, Emily, and Anne adopted the pseudonyms of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell. Although the 1846 book sold only two copies, its publication inspired each of the Brontë sisters to begin work on a novel; Emily's was *Wuthering Heights* (1847). The initial critical reception of the novel was extremely negative. As one reviewer wrote, "the only consolation which we have . . . is that it will never be generally read." *Wuthering Heights* has gone on to be one of the most famous and influential novels of the period. Brontë began work on a second novel, but a year after the publication of *Wuthering Heights*, she died of tuberculosis.

Many of Brontë's poems—"Remembrance" and "The Prisoner," for example—were written for the Gondal saga and express its preoccupation with political intrigue, passionate love, rebellion, war, imprisonment, and exile. Brontë also wrote personal lyrics unconnected with the Gondal stories; but both groups of poems share a drive to break through the constrictions of ordinary life, whether by the transfigurative power of the imagination, by union with another, or by death itself. Like Catherine and Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights,* the speakers of Brontë's poems yearn for a fuller, freer world of spirit, transcending the forms and limits of mortal life. Her concern with a visionary world links her to the Romantic poets, particularly to Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley; but her hymnlike stanzas have a haunting quality that distinguishes her individual voice.

I’m happiest when most away

I’m happiest when most away
I can bear my soul from its home of clay
On a windy night when the moon is bright
And the eye can wander through worlds of light—
When I am not and none beside—
Nor earth nor sea nor cloudless sky—
But only spirit wandering wide
Through infinite immensity.

1838 1910

The Night-Wind

In summer's mellow midnight,
A cloudless moon shone through
Our open parlour window
And rosetrees wet with dew.

I sat in silent musing,
The soft wind waved my hair:
It told me Heaven was glorious.
And sleeping Earth was fair.

I needed not its breathing
To bring such thoughts to me,
But still it whispered lowly,
"How dark the woods will be!

"The thick leaves in my murmur
Are rustling like a dream,
And all their myriad voices
Instinct° with spirit seem."

I said, "Go, gentle singer,
Thy wooing voice is kind,
But do not think its music
Has power to reach my mind.

"Play with the scented flower,
The young tree's supple bough,
And leave my human feelings
In their own course to flow."

The wanderer would not leave me;
Its kiss grew warmer still—

"O come," it sighed so sweetly,
"I'll win thee 'gainst thy will.

"Have we not been from childhood friends?
Have I not loved thee long?
As long as thou hast loved the night
Whose silence wakes my song.

"And when thy heart is laid at rest
Beneath the church-yard stone
I shall have time enough to mourn
And thou to be alone."

Notes

- °: *imbued*Return to reference °

Remembrance[1]

Cold in the earth, and the deep snow piled above thee!
Far, far removed, cold in the dreary grave!
Have I forgot, my Only Love, to love thee,
Severed at last by Time's all-wearing wave?

Now, when alone, do my thoughts no longer hover
Over the mountains, on that northern shore;
Resting their wings where heath and fern-leaves cover
Thy noble heart for ever, ever more?

Cold in the earth, and fifteen wild Decembers
From those brown hills have melted into spring—
Faithful indeed is the spirit that remembers
After such years of change and suffering!

Sweet Love of youth, forgive if I forget thee
While the World's tide is bearing me along:
Other desires and other hopes beset me,
Hopes which obscure but cannot do thee wrong.

No later light has lightened up my heaven,
No second morn has ever shone for me:
All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given—
All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee.

But when the days of golden dreams had perished
And even Despair was powerless to destroy,
Then did I learn how existence could be cherished,
Strengthened and fed without the aid of joy;

Then did I check the tears of useless passion,
Weaned my young soul from yearning after thine;
Sternly denied its burning wish to hasten
Down to that tomb already more than mine!

And even yet, I dare not let it languish,
Dare not indulge in Memory's rapturous pain;
Once drinking deep of that divinest anguish,
How could I seek the empty world again?

1845 1846

Endnotes

- Note 1: Titled in manuscript "R. Alcona to J. Breznaida," this poem was originally composed as a lament by the heroine of the Gondal saga for the hero's death.Return to reference 1

Stars

Ah! why, because the dazzling sun
Restored our earth to joy
Have you departed, every one,
And left a desert sky?

All through the night, your glorious eyes
Were gazing down in mine,
And with a full heart's thankful sighs
I blessed that watch divine!

I was at peace, and drank your beams
As they were life to me
And revelled in my changeful dreams
Like petrel° on the sea.

Thought followed thought—star followed star
Through boundless regions on,
While one sweet influence, near and far,
Thrilled through and proved us one.

Why did the morning dawn to break
So great, so pure a spell,
And scorch with fire the tranquil cheek
Where your cool radiance fell?

Blood-red he rose, and arrow-straight
His fierce beams struck my brow:
The soul of Nature sprang elate,
But mine sank sad and low!

My lids closed down—yet through their veil
I saw him blazing still;

And steep in gold the misty dale
And flash upon the hill.

I turned me to the pillow then
To call back Night, and see
Your worlds of solemn light, again
Throb with my heart and me!

It would not do—the pillow glowed
And glowed both roof and floor,
And birds sang loudly in the wood,
And fresh winds shook the door.

The curtains waved, the wakened flies
Were murmuring round my room,
Imprisoned there, till I should rise
And give them leave to roam.

O Stars and Dreams and Gentle Night;
O Night and Stars return!
And hide me from the hostile light
That does not warm, but burn—

That drains the blood of suffering men;
Drinks tears, instead of dew:
Let me sleep through his blinding reign,
And only wake with you!

1845 1846

Notes

- °: *small dark seabirds* Return to reference °

The Prisoner. A Fragment[1]

In the dungeon crypts idly did I stray,
Reckless of the lives wasting there away;
"Draw the ponderous bars; open, Warder stern!"
He dare not say me nay—the hinges harshly turn.

"Our guests are darkly lodged," I whispered, gazing through
The vault whose grated eye showed heaven more grey than blue.
(This was when glad spring laughed in awaking pride.)
"Aye, darkly lodged enough!" returned my sullen guide.

Then, God forgive my youth, forgive my careless tongue!
I scoffed, as the chill chains on the damp flagstones rung;
"Confined in triple walls, art thou so much to fear,
That we must bind thee down and clench thy fetters here?"

The captive raised her face; it was as soft and mild
As sculptured marble saint or slumbering, unweaned child;
It was so soft and mild, it was so sweet and fair,
Pain could not trace a line nor grief a shadow there!

The captive raised her hand and pressed it to her brow:
"I have been struck," she said, "and I am suffering now;
Yet these are little worth, your bolts and irons strong;
And were they forged in steel they could not hold me long."

Hoarse laughed the jailor grim: "Shall I be won to hear;
Dost think, fond° dreaming wretch, that *I* shall grant thy prayer?
Or, better still, wilt melt my master's heart with groans?
Ah, sooner might the sun thaw down these granite stones!

"My master's voice is low, his aspect bland and kind,
But hard as hardest flint the soul that lurks behind;
And I am rough and rude, yet not more rough to see
Than is the hidden ghost which has its home in me!"

About her lips there played a smile of almost scorn:
"My friend," she gently said, "you have not heard me mourn;
When you my kindred's lives—*my* lost life, can restore
Then may I weep and sue—but *never*, Friend, before!

"Still, let my tyrants know, I am not doomed to wear
Year after year in gloom and desolate despair;
A messenger of Hope comes every night to me,
And offers, for short life, eternal liberty.

"He comes with western winds, with evening's wandering airs,
With that clear dusk of heaven that brings the thickest stars;
Winds take a pensive tone, and stars a tender fire,
And visions rise and change that kill me with desire—

"Desire for nothing known in my maturer years
When joy grew mad with awe at counting future tears;
When, if my spirit's sky was full of flashes warm,
I knew not whence they came, from sun or thunderstorm;

"But first a hush of peace, a soundless calm descends;
The struggle of distress and fierce impatience ends;
Mute music soothes my breast—unuttered harmony
That I could never dream till earth was lost to me.

"Then dawns the Invisible, the Unseen its truth reveals;
My outward sense is gone, my inward essence feels—
Its wings are almost free, its home, its harbour found;
Measuring the gulf it stoops and dares the final bound!

"Oh, dreadful is the check—intense the agony
When the ear begins to hear and the eye begins to see;
When the pulse begins to throb, the brain to think again,
The soul to feel the flesh and the flesh to feel the chain!

"Yet I would lose no sting, would wish no torture less;
The more that anguish racks the earlier it will bless;
And robed in fires of Hell, or bright with heavenly shine,
If it but herald Death, the vision is divine."[2]

She ceased to speak, and we, unanswering turned to go—
We had no further power to work the captive woe;
Her cheek, her gleaming eye, declared that man had given
A sentence unapproved, and overruled by Heaven.

1845 1846

Endnotes

- Note 1: An excerpt from a poem in the Gondal manuscript, "Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle," describing an event unplaced in the story, this poem was printed as "The Prisoner. A Fragment" in *Poems* (1846) by the Brontë sisters. The speaker, a man, is visiting a dungeon in his father's castle.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare with the words of the dying Catherine in *Wuthering Heights* (1847), chap. 15: "The thing that irks me most is this shattered prison [my body]. . . . I'm tired, tired of being enclosed here. I'm wearying to escape into that glorious world, and to be always there. . . . I shall be incomparably beyond and above you all."Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *foolish*Return to reference °

No coward soul is mine[1]

No coward soul is mine
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere
I see Heaven's glories shine
And Faith shines equal arming me from Fear

O God within my breast
Almighty ever-present Deity
Life, that in me hast rest
As I Undying Life, have power in Thee

Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts, unutterably vain,
Worthless as withered weeds
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main

To waken doubt in one
Holding so fast by thy infinity
So surely anchored on
The steadfast rock of Immortality

With wide-embracing love
Thy spirit animates eternal years
Pervades and broods above,
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates and rears

Though Earth and moon were gone
And suns and universes ceased to be
And thou wert left alone
Every Existence would exist in thee

There is not room for Death
Nor atom that his might could render void

Since thou art Being and Breath
And what thou art may never be destroyed.

1846 1850

Endnotes

- Note 1: According to Charlotte Brontë, these are the last lines her sister wrote.Return to reference 1

JOHN RUSKIN
1819–1900

John Ruskin was both the leading critic of art in the mid- to late nineteenth century and an important critic of society. These two roles can be traced back to two major influences of his childhood. His father, a wealthy wine merchant, enjoyed travel, and on tours of the Continent he introduced his son to landscapes, architecture, and art. From this exposure Ruskin acquired a zest for beauty that animates even the most theoretical of his discussions of aesthetics. From his daily Bible readings under the direction of his mother, a devout Evangelical Christian, Ruskin derived some elements of his lush and highly rhythmical prose style as well as his sense of prophecy and mission as a critic of modern society.

Ruskin's life was spent in traveling, lecturing, and writing. His prodigious literary output can be roughly divided into three phases. At first he was preoccupied with problems of art. *Modern Painters* (1843–60), which he began writing at the age of twenty-three after his graduation from Oxford, was a defense of the English landscape painter J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851). This defense (which was to extend to five volumes) involved Ruskin in problems of truth in art (as in his chapter "Pathetic Fallacy") and in the ultimate importance of imagination (as in his discussion of Turner's painting *The Slave Ship*).

During the 1850s Ruskin's principal interest shifted from art to architecture, especially to the problem of determining what kind of

society is capable of producing great buildings. His enthusiasm for Gothic architecture was infectious, and he has sometimes been blamed for the prevalence of Gothic buildings on college campuses in America. A study of *The Stones of Venice* (1851–53), however (especially the chapter printed here), will show that merely to revive the Gothic style was not his concern. What he wanted to revive was the kind of society that had produced such architecture, a society in which the individual workers could express themselves and enjoy what Ruskin's disciple William Morris called "work-pleasure." A mechanized production-line society, such as Ruskin's or our own, could produce not Gothic architecture but only imitations of its mannerisms. Ruskin's concern was to change industrial society, not to decorate concrete towers with gargoyles.

This interest in the stultifying effects of industrialism led Ruskin gradually into economics. After 1860 the critic of art became (like the writer he most greatly admired, Thomas Carlyle [1795–1881]) an outspoken critic of laissez-faire, or noninterventionist, economics. In *Unto This Last* (1860), for example, he sought to show that self-seeking business relationships could be reconfigured on the principle of dedicated service, taking as a model the learned professions and the military. The soldier, however unrefined, is more highly regarded by society than the capitalist, Ruskin said, "for the soldier's trade . . . is not slaying, but being slain." Although he styled himself "a violent Tory of the old school;—Walter Scott's school," he was regarded by many of his contemporaries as a radical eccentric. Yet, in time his social criticism gained a following among writers as diverse as William Morris, George Bernard Shaw, D. H. Lawrence, and the founders of the British Labour Party (1900).

Ruskin's realization, after 1860, that despite his fame he was becoming isolated and that the world was continuing to move in directions opposite from those to which he pointed may have contributed to the recurrent mental breakdowns from which he suffered between 1870 and 1900. As he reports in his memoir, *Fors Clavigera* (1880): "The doctors said I went mad, this time two years ago, from overwork," but he had not then been working harder than

usual. "I went mad because nothing came of my work . . . because after I got [my manuscripts] published, nobody believed a word of them." Also contributing to his breakdowns may have been his unhappiness in his relations with women. His marriage to Effie Gray (1828–1897) in 1848 was a disaster. After six years of living together, an annulment was arranged on the grounds that the marriage had not been consummated. One of Gray's admirers was the Pre-Raphaelite painter John Millais, who fell in love with her at a time when he was painting her husband's portrait; shortly after the annulment he married her. (Given the failure of Ruskin's marriage and subsequent romantic relationships, it is ironic that he was to produce a highly influential, and frequently reprinted, description of the ideal characters of man and woman, husband and wife, in an 1864 lecture, "Of Queens' Gardens." See the excerpt in "Women, Gender, and Sexuality" in this volume.) In later years Ruskin fell in love with a young Irish girl, Rose La Touche, whom he met when he was nearly forty and she was a child of ten. They were divided not only by the gap of age but by religious differences. She was an intensely pious believer, and for several years after Ruskin proposed marriage to her, when she was eighteen, she tried unsuccessfully to persuade him to return to the Evangelical faith that he had abandoned. In 1875, after herself experiencing bouts of mental illness, La Touche died at the age of twenty-seven.

Despite both the despair that he suffered following La Touche's death and the recurring attacks of mental illness that blighted the last thirty-five years of his life, Ruskin remained active and productive up until his final silent decade of the 1890s. His publications during his active period included six volumes of his lectures on art that he had delivered as Slade Professor of Fine Arts at Oxford and his letters to laborers, *Fors Clavigera* (1871–84). One topic that becomes especially prominent in these later writings is pollution of air and water, an ideal subject for Ruskin's eloquence. In discussing it he combines his lifelong love for beautiful landscape and landscape painting with his later acquired conviction that modern industrial leadership was woefully irresponsible. A short

section of his published lecture, “The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century” is reprinted in “The Promise and Price of Industrialization” in this volume; it captures his (prescient) sense that modern industry stood to do irreparable harm to the natural world.

From Modern Painters

[A DEFINITION OF GREATNESS IN ART][1]

Painting, or art generally, as such, with all its technicalities, difficulties, and particular ends, is nothing but a noble and expressive language, invaluable as the vehicle of thought, but by itself nothing. He who has learned what is commonly considered the whole art of painting, that is, the art of representing any natural object faithfully, has as yet only learned the language by which his thoughts are to be expressed. He has done just as much towards being that which we ought to respect as a great painter, as a man who has learnt how to express himself grammatically and melodiously has towards being a great poet. The language is, indeed, more difficult of acquirement in the one case than in the other, and possesses more power of delighting the sense, while it speaks to the intellect; but it is, nevertheless, nothing more than language, and all those excellences which are peculiar to the painter as such, are merely what rhythm, melody, precision, and force are in the words of the orator and the poet, necessary to their greatness, but not the tests of their greatness. It is not by the mode of representing and saying, but by what is represented and said, that the respective greatness either of the painter or the writer is to be finally determined.

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So that, if I say that the greatest picture is that which conveys to the mind of the spectator the greatest number of the greatest ideas, I have a definition which will include as subjects of comparison every pleasure which art is capable of conveying. If I were to say, on the contrary, that the best picture was that which most closely imitated nature, I should assume that art could only please by imitating nature; and I should cast out of the pale[2] of criticism those parts of works of art which are not imitative, that is to say, intrinsic beauties of color and form, and those works of art wholly, which, like the

Arabesques of Raffaelle in the Loggias,[3] are not imitative at all. Now, I want a definition of art wide enough to include all its varieties of aim. I do not say, therefore, that the art is greatest which gives most pleasure, because perhaps there is some art whose end is to teach, and not to please. I do not say that the art is greatest which teaches us most, because perhaps there is some art whose end is to please, and not to teach. I do not say that the art is greatest which imitates best, because perhaps there is some art whose end is to create and not to imitate. But I say that the art is greatest which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatsoever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas; and I call an idea great in proportion as it is received by a higher faculty of the mind, and as it more fully occupies, and in occupying, exercises and exalts, the faculty by which it is received.

If this, then, be the definition of great art, that of a great artist naturally follows. He is the greatest artist who has embodied, in the sum of his works, the greatest number of the greatest ideas.

Endnotes

- Note 1: From vol. 1, part 1, section 1, chap. 2.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Beyond the notice or attention.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The arabesques in the Loggia of the Vatican, designed by the Italian painter Raphael (1483–1520), were decorative wall paintings that featured a complex pattern of leaves, animals, and human figures.Return to reference 3

["THE SLAVE SHIP"][4]

But I think the noblest sea that Turner has ever painted, and, if so, the noblest certainly ever painted by man, is that of "The Slave Ship," the chief Academy[5] picture of the exhibition of 1840. It is a sunset on the Atlantic after prolonged storm; but the storm is partially lulled, and the torn and streaming rain clouds are moving in scarlet lines to lose themselves in the hollow of the night. The whole surface of sea included in the picture is divided into two ridges of enormous swell, not high, nor local, but a low, broad heaving of the whole ocean, like the lifting of its bosom by deep-drawn breath after the torture of the storm. Between these two ridges the fire of the sunset falls along the trough of the sea, dyeing it with an awful but glorious light, the intense and lurid splendor which burns like gold and bathes like blood. Along this fiery path and valley the tossing waves by which the swell of the sea is restlessly divided lift themselves in dark, indefinite, fantastic forms, each casting a faint and ghastly shadow behind it along the illumined foam. They do not rise everywhere, but three or four together in wild groups, fitfully and furiously, as the under-strength of the swell compels or permits them; leaving between them treacherous spaces of level and whirling water, now lighted with green and lamplike fire, now flashing back the gold of the declining sun, now fearfully shed from above with the indistinguishable images of the burning clouds, which fall upon them in flakes of crimson and scarlet and give to the reckless waves the added motion of their own fiery being. Purple and blue, the lurid shadows of the hollow breakers are cast upon the mist of night, which gathers cold and low, advancing like the shadow of death upon the guilty ship as it labors amidst the lightning of the sea, its thin masts written upon the sky in lines of blood, girded with condemnation in that fearful hue which signs the sky with horror, and mixes its flaming flood with the sunlight, and, cast far along the desolate heave of the sepulchral waves, incarnadines the multitudinous sea.[6]

I believe, if I were reduced to rest Turner's immortality upon any single work, I should choose this. Its daring conception—ideal in the highest sense of the word—is based on the purest truth, and wrought out with the concentrated knowledge of a life; its color is absolutely perfect, not one false or morbid hue in any part or line, and so modulated that every square inch of canvas is a perfect composition; its drawing as accurate as fearless; the ship buoyant, bending, and full of motion; its tones as true as they are wonderful; and the whole picture dedicated to the most sublime of subjects and impressions—completing thus the perfect system of all truth which we have shown to be formed by Turner's works—the power, majesty, and deathfulness of the open, deep, illimitable Sea.

1843

Endnotes

- Note 4: From vol. 1, part 2, section 5, chap. 3.Return to reference 4
- Note 5:
  The Royal Academy of Arts, founded in London in 1768. The painting (included in this volume's color insert) is by the great British landscapist J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851) and was originally titled "Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying—Typhoon Coming On." Turner was inspired to paint it after reading about the slave ship *Zong* in Thomas Clarkson's *History and Abolition of the Slave Trade* (1808). In 1781, the *Zong*'s captain ordered 133 sick and dying slaves thrown overboard so that insurance money available only for slaves "lost at sea" could be collected. The painting was given to Ruskin by his father as a New Year's present in 1844 and hung in the Ruskin household for a number of years until Ruskin decided to sell it because he found its subject "too painful to live with." It now hangs in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.
  Return to reference 5

- Note 6: Compare with Shakespeare's *Macbeth* 2.2.60: "this my hand will rather / The multitudinous seas incarnadine." "Incarnadines": reddens.Return to reference 6

From *Of the Pathetic Fallacy*[7]

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Now therefore, putting these tiresome and absurd words[8] quite out of our way, we may go on at our ease to examine the point in question—namely, the difference between the ordinary, proper, and true appearances of things to us; and the extraordinary, or false appearances, when we are under the influence of emotion, or contemplative fancy; false appearances, I say, as being entirely unconnected with any real power of character in the object, and only imputed to it by us.

For instance—

> The spendthrift crocus, bursting through the mold
> Naked and shivering, with his cup of gold.[9]

This is very beautiful, and yet very untrue. The crocus is not a spendthrift, but a hardy plant; its yellow is not gold, but saffron. How is it that we enjoy so much the having it put into our heads that it is anything else than a plain crocus?

It is an important question. For, throughout our past reasonings about art, we have always found that nothing could be good or useful, or ultimately pleasurable, which was untrue. But here is something pleasurable in written poetry, which is nevertheless *un*true. And what is more, if we think over our favorite poetry, we shall find it full of this kind of fallacy, and that we like it all the more for being so.

It will appear also, on consideration of the matter, that this fallacy is of two principal kinds. Either, as in this case of the crocus, it is the fallacy of willful fancy, which involves no real expectation that it will be believed; or else it is a fallacy caused by an excited state of the feelings, making us, for the time, more or less irrational. Of the cheating of the fancy we shall have to speak presently; but,

in this chapter, I want to examine the nature of the other error, that which the mind admits when affected strongly by emotion. Thus, for instance, in *Alton Locke*—

> They rowed her in across the rolling foam—
> The cruel, crawling foam.[1]

The foam is not cruel, neither does it crawl. The state of mind which attributes to it these characters of a living creature is one in which the reason is unhinged by grief. All violent feelings have the same effect. They produce in us a falseness in all our impressions of external things, which I would generally characterize as the "pathetic fallacy."

Now we are in the habit of considering this fallacy as eminently a character of poetical description, and the temper of mind in which we allow it, as one eminently poetical, because passionate. But, I believe, if we look well into the matter, that we shall find the greatest poets do not often admit this kind of falseness—that it is only the second order of poets who much delight in it.

Thus, when Dante describes the spirits falling from the bank of Acheron "as dead leaves flutter from a bough,"[2] he gives the most perfect image possible of their utter lightness, feebleness, passiveness, and scattering agony of despair, without, however, for an instant losing his own clear perception that *these* are souls, and *those* are leaves: he makes no confusion of one with the other. But when Coleridge speaks of

> The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
> That dances as often as dance it can,[3]

he has a morbid, that is to say, a so far false, idea about the leaf: he fancies a life in it, and will, which there are not; confuses its powerlessness with choice, its fading death with merriment, and the wind that shakes it with music. Here, however, there is some beauty, even in the morbid passage; but take an instance in Homer and Pope. Without the knowledge of Ulysses, Elpenor, his youngest

follower, has fallen from an upper chamber in the Circean palace, and has been left dead, unmissed by his leader or companions, in the haste of their departure. They cross the sea to the Cimmerian land; and Ulysses summons the shades from Tartarus.[4] The first which appears is that of the lost Elpenor. Ulysses, amazed, and in exactly the spirit of bitter and terrified lightness which is seen in Hamlet, addresses the spirit with the simple, startled words: "Elpenor! How earnest thou under the shadowy darkness? Hast thou come faster on foot than I in my black ship?"[5] Which Pope renders thus:

> O, say, what angry power Elpenor led
> To glide in shades, and wander with the dead?
> How could thy soul, by realms and seas disjoined,
> Outfly the nimble sail, and leave the lagging wind?

I sincerely hope the reader finds no pleasure here, either in the nimbleness of the sail, or the laziness of the wind! And yet how is it that these conceits[6] are so painful now, when they have been pleasant to us in the other instances?

For a very simple reason. They are not a *pathetic* fallacy at all, for they are put into the mouth of the wrong passion—a passion which never could possibly have spoken them—agonized curiosity. Ulysses wants to know the facts of the matter; and the very last thing his mind could do at the moment would be to pause, or suggest in anywise what was *not* a fact. The delay in the first three lines, and conceit in the last, jar upon us instantly, like the most frightful discord in music. No poet of true imaginative power would possibly have written the passage.

Therefore, we see that the spirit of truth must guide us in some sort, even in our enjoyment of fallacy. Coleridge's fallacy has no discord in it, but Pope's has set our teeth on edge. * * *

1856

Endnotes

- Note 7:
  From vol. 3, part 4, chap. 12. In this celebrated chapter Ruskin shifts from discussing problems of truth and realism in art to the same problems in literature. The term *pathetic* refers not to something feebly ineffective but to the emotion (pathos) with which a writer invests highlighting of objects and to the distortion (fallacy) that may result. Poets such as Tennyson protested that Ruskin was being unfairly rigorous in highlighting the fallacy, and Ruskin himself falls into it often. See, for example, his reference to "the guilty ship" in his discussion of Turner's *The Slave Ship* (p. 466).
  Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The metaphysical terms *objective* and *subjective* as applied to kinds of truth.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: From "Astraea" (1850), a poem by Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809–1894).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: From chap. 26 of the novel *Alton Locke* (1850) by Charles Kingsley (1819–1875).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: *Inferno* 3.112, by Dante Alighieri (1265–1321). Acheron is a river of the classical underworld.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: *Christabel* (1816), lines 49–50, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In classical mythology the lowest region of the underworld.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: *Odyssey* (8th century B.C.E.) 11.51. The translation by Alexander Pope (1688–1744) was published in 1715–20.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Extended poetic devices.Return to reference 6

From The Stones of Venice

[THE SAVAGENESS OF GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE][1]

I am not sure when the word "Gothic" was first generically applied to the architecture of the North; but I presume that, whatever the date of its original usage, it was intended to imply reproach, and express the barbaric character of the nations among whom that architecture arose. It never implied that they were literally of Gothic lineage, far less that their architecture had been originally invented by the Goths themselves; but it did imply that they and their buildings together exhibited a degree of sternness and rudeness,[2] which, in contradistinction to the character of Southern and Eastern nations, appeared like a perpetual reflection of the contrast between the Goth and the Roman in their first encounter. And when that fallen Roman, in the utmost impotence of his luxury, and insolence of his guilt, became the model for the imitation of civilized Europe,[3] at the close of the so-called Dark Ages, the word Gothic became a term of unmitigated contempt, not unmixed with aversion. From that contempt, by the exertion of the antiquaries and architects of this century, Gothic architecture has been sufficiently vindicated; and perhaps some among us, in our admiration of the magnificent science of its structure, and sacredness of its expression, might desire that the term of ancient reproach should be withdrawn, and some other, of more apparent honorableness, adopted in its place. There is no chance, as there is no need, of such a substitution. As far as the epithet was used scornfully, it was used falsely; but there is no reproach in the word, rightly understood; on the contrary, there is a profound truth, which the instinct of mankind almost unconsciously recognizes. It is true, greatly and deeply true, that the architecture of the North is rude and wild; but it is not true that, for this reason, we are to condemn it, or despise. Far otherwise: I

believe it is in this very character that it deserves our profoundest reverence.

The charts of the world which have been drawn up by modern science have thrown into a narrow space the expression of a vast amount of knowledge, but I have never yet seen any one pictorial enough to enable the spectator to imagine the kind of contrast in physical character which exists between Northern and Southern countries. We know the differences in detail, but we have not that broad glance and grasp which would enable us to feel them in their fullness. We know that gentians grow on the Alps, and olives on the Apennines; but we do not enough conceive for ourselves that variegated mosaic of the world's surface which a bird sees in its migration, that difference between the district of the gentian and of the olive which the stork and the swallow see far off, as they lean upon the sirocco wind.[4] Let us, for a moment, try to raise ourselves even above the level of their flight, and imagine the Mediterranean lying beneath us like an irregular lake, and all its ancient promontories sleeping in the sun: here and there an angry spot of thunder, a gray stain of storm, moving upon the burning field; and here and there a fixed wreath of white volcano smoke, surrounded by its circle of ashes; but for the most part a great peacefulness of light, Syria and Greece, Italy and Spain, laid like pieces of a golden pavement into the sea-blue, chased, as we stoop nearer to them, with bossy[5] beaten work of mountain chains, and glowing softly with terraced gardens, and flowers heavy with frankincense, mixed among masses of laurel, and orange, and plumy palm, that abate with their gray-green shadows the burning of the marble rocks, and of the ledges of porphyry sloping under lucent sand. Then let us pass farther towards the north, until we see the orient colors change gradually into a vast belt of rainy green, where the pastures of Switzerland, and poplar valleys of France, and dark forests of the Danube and Carpathians stretch from the mouths of the Loire to those of the Volga, seen through clefts in gray swirls of rain cloud and flaky veils of the mist of the brooks, spreading low along the pasture lands: and then, farther north still, to see the earth heave

into mighty masses of leaden rock and heathy moor, bordering with a broad waste of gloomy purple that belt of field and wood, and splintering into irregular and grisly islands amidst the northern seas, beaten by storm, and chilled by ice drift, and tormented by furious pulses of contending tide, until the roots of the last forests fail from among the hill ravines, and the hunger of the north wind bites their peaks into barrenness; and, at last, the wall of ice, durable like iron, sets, deathlike, its white teeth against us out of the polar twilight. And, having once traversed in thought this gradation of the zoned iris of the earth in all its material vastness, let us go down nearer to it, and watch the parallel change in the belt of animal life: the multitudes of swift and brilliant creatures that glance in the air and sea, or tread the sands of the southern zone; striped zebras and spotted leopards, glistening serpents, and birds arrayed in purple and scarlet. Let us contrast their delicacy and brilliancy of color, and swiftness of motion, with the frost-cramped strength, and shaggy covering, and dusky plumage of the northern tribes; contrast the Arabian horse with the Shetland,[6] the tiger and leopard with the wolf and bear, the antelope with the elk, the bird of paradise with the osprey: and then, submissively acknowledging the great laws by which the earth and all that it bears are ruled throughout their being, let us not condemn, but rejoice in the expression by man of his own rest in the statutes of the lands that gave him birth. Let us watch him with reverence as he sets side by side the burning gems, and smooths with soft sculpture the jasper pillars, that are to reflect a ceaseless sunshine, and rise into a cloudless sky: but not with less reverence let us stand by him, when, with rough strength and hurried stroke, he smites an uncouth animation out of the rocks which he has torn from among the moss of the moorland, and heaves into the darkened air the pile of iron buttress and rugged wall, instinct with[7] work of an imagination as wild and wayward as the northern sea; creations of ungainly shape and rigid limb, but full of wolfish life; fierce as the winds that beat, and changeful as the clouds that shade them.

There is, I repeat, no degradation, no reproach in this, but all dignity and honorableness: and we should err grievously in refusing either to recognize as an essential character of the existing architecture of the North, or to admit as a desirable character in that which it yet may be, this wildness of thought, and roughness of work; this look of mountain brotherhood between the cathedral and the Alp; this magnificence of sturdy power, put forth only the more energetically because the fine finger-touch was chilled away by the frosty wind, and the eye dimmed by the moor mist, or blinded by the hail; this outspeaking of the strong spirit of men who may not gather redundant fruitage from the earth, nor bask in dreamy benignity of sunshine, but must break the rock for bread, and cleave the forest for fire, and show, even in what they did for their delight, some of the hard habits of the arm and heart that grew on them as they swung the ax or pressed the plow.

If, however, the savageness of Gothic architecture, merely as an expression of its origin among Northern nations, may be considered, in some sort, a noble character, it possesses a higher nobility still, when considered as an index, not of climate, but of religious principle.

In the 13th and 14th paragraphs of Chapter XXI of the first volume of this work, it was noticed that the systems of architectural ornament, properly so called, might be divided into three: (1) Servile ornament, in which the execution or power of the inferior workman is entirely subjected to the intellect of the higher; (2) Constitutional ornament, in which the executive inferior power is, to a certain point, emancipated and independent, having a will of its own, yet confessing its inferiority and rendering obedience to higher powers; and (3) Revolutionary ornament, in which no executive inferiority is admitted at all. I must here explain the nature of these divisions at somewhat greater length.

Of Servile ornament, the principal schools are the Greek, Ninevite, and Egyptian; but their servility is of different kinds. The Greek master-workman was far advanced in knowledge and power above the Assyrian or Egyptian. Neither he nor those for whom he

worked could endure the appearance of imperfection in anything; and, therefore, what ornament he appointed to be done by those beneath him was composed of mere geometrical forms—balls, ridges, and perfectly symmetrical foliage—which could be executed with absolute precision by line and rule, and were as perfect in their way, when completed, as his own figure sculpture. The Assyrian and Egyptian, on the contrary, less cognizant of accurate form in anything, were content to allow their figure sculpture to be executed by inferior workmen, but lowered the method of its treatment to a standard which every workman could reach, and then trained him by discipline so rigid that there was no chance of his falling beneath the standard appointed. The Greek gave to the lower workman no subject which he could not perfectly execute. The Assyrian gave him subjects which he could only execute imperfectly, but fixed a legal standard for his imperfection. The workman was, in both systems, a slave.

But in the medieval, or especially Christian, system of ornament, this slavery is done away with altogether; Christianity having recognized, in small things as well as great, the individual value of every soul. But it not only recognizes its value; it confesses its imperfection, in only bestowing dignity upon the acknowledgment of unworthiness. That admission of lost power and fallen nature, which the Greek or Ninevite felt to be intensely painful, and, as far as might be, altogether refused, the Christian makes daily and hourly, contemplating the fact of it without fear, as tending, in the end, to God's greater glory. Therefore, to every spirit which Christianity summons to her service, her exhortation is: Do what you can, and confess frankly what you are unable to do; neither let your effort be shortened for fear of failure, nor your confession silenced for fear of shame. And it is, perhaps, the principal admirableness of the Gothic schools of architecture, that they thus receive the results of the labor of inferior minds; and out of fragments full of imperfection, and betraying that imperfection in every touch, indulgently raise up a stately and unaccusable whole.

But the modern English mind has this much in common with that of the Greek, that it intensely desires, in all things, the utmost completion or perfection compatible with their nature. This is a noble character in the abstract, but becomes ignoble when it causes us to forget the relative dignities of that nature itself, and to prefer the perfectness of the lower nature to the imperfection of the higher; not considering that as, judged by such a rule, all the brute animals would be preferable to man, because more perfect in their functions and kind, and yet are always held inferior to him, so also in the works of man, those which are more perfect in their kind are always inferior to those which are, in their nature, liable to more faults and shortcomings. For the finer the nature, the more flaws it will show through the clearness of it; and it is a law of this universe that the best things shall be seldomest seen in their best form. The wild grass grows well and strongly, one year with another; but the wheat is, according to the greater nobleness of its nature, liable to the bitterer blight. And therefore, while in all things that we see, or do, we are to desire perfection, and strive for it, we are nevertheless not to set the meaner[8] thing, in its narrow accomplishment, above the nobler thing, in its mighty progress; not to esteem smooth minuteness above shattered majesty; not to prefer mean victory to honorable defeat; not to lower the level of our aim, that we may the more surely enjoy the complacency of success. But above all, in our dealings with the souls of other men, we are to take care how we check, by severe requirement or narrow caution, efforts which might otherwise lead to a noble issue; and, still more, how we withhold our admiration from great excellencies, because they are mingled with rough faults. Now, in the make and nature of every man, however rude or simple, whom we employ in manual labor, there are some powers for better things: some tardy imagination, torpid capacity of emotion, tottering steps of thought, there are, even at the worst; and in most cases it is all our own fault that they *are* tardy or torpid. But they cannot be strengthened, unless we are content to take them in their feebleness, and unless we prize and honor them in their imperfection above the best and most perfect manual skill. And

this is what we have to do with all our laborers; to look for the *thoughtful* part of them, and get that out of them, whatever we lose for it, whatever faults and errors we are obliged to take with it. For the best that is in them cannot manifest itself, but in company with much error. Understand this clearly: You can teach a man to draw a straight line, and to cut one; to strike a curved line, and to carve it; and to copy and carve any number of given lines or forms, with admirable speed and perfect precision; and you find his work perfect of its kind: but if you ask him to think about any of those forms, to consider if he cannot find any better in his own head, he stops; his execution becomes hesitating; he thinks, and ten to one he thinks wrong; ten to one he makes a mistake in the first touch he gives to his work as a thinking being. But you have made a man of him for all that. He was only a machine before, an animated tool.

And observe, you are put to stern choice in this matter. You must either make a tool of the creature, or a man of him. You cannot make both. Men were not intended to work with the accuracy of tools, to be precise and perfect in all their actions. If you will have that precision out of them, and make their fingers measure degrees like cogwheels, and their arms strike curves like compasses, you must unhumanize them. All the energy of their spirits must be given to make cogs and compasses of themselves. All their attention and strength must go to the accomplishment of the mean act. The eye of the soul must be bent upon the finger point, and the soul's force must fill all the invisible nerves that guide it, ten hours a day, that it may not err from its steely precision, and so soul and sight be worn away, and the whole human being be lost at last—a heap of sawdust, so far as its intellectual work in this world is concerned; saved only by its Heart, which cannot go into the form of cogs and compasses, but expands, after the ten hours are over, into fireside humanity. On the other hand, if you will make a man of the working creature, you cannot make a tool. Let him but begin to imagine, to think, to try to do anything worth doing; and the engine-turned precision is lost at once. Out come all his roughness, all his dullness, all his incapability; shame upon shame, failure upon failure, pause

after pause: but out comes the whole majesty of him also; and we know the height of it only, when we see the clouds settling upon him. And, whether the clouds be bright or dark, there will be transfiguration behind and within them.

And now, reader, look around this English room of yours, about which you have been proud so often, because the work of it was so good and strong, and the ornaments of it so finished. Examine again all those accurate moldings, and perfect polishings, and unerring adjustments of the seasoned wood and tempered steel. Many a time you have exulted over them, and thought how great England was, because her slightest work was done so thoroughly. Alas! if read rightly, these perfectnesses are signs of a slavery in our England a thousand times more bitter and more degrading than that of the scourged African, or helot[9] Greek. Men may be beaten, chained, tormented, yoked like cattle, slaughtered like summer flies, and yet remain in one sense, and the best sense, free. But to smother their souls within them, to blight and hew into rotting pollards[1] the suckling branches of their human intelligence, to make the flesh and skin which, after the worm's work on it, is to see God,[2] into leathern thongs to yoke machinery with—this it is to be slave-masters indeed; and there might be more freedom in England, though her feudal lords' lightest words were worth men's lives, and though the blood of the vexed husbandman dropped in the furrows of her fields, than there is while the animation of her multitudes is sent like fuel to feed the factory smoke, and the strength of them is given daily to be wasted into the fineness of a web, or racked into the exactness of a line.

And, on the other hand, go forth again to gaze upon the old cathedral front, where you have smiled so often at the fantastic[3] ignorance of the old sculptors: examine once more those ugly goblins, and formless monsters, and stern statues, anatomiless[4] and rigid; but do not mock at them, for they are signs of the life and liberty of every workman who struck the stone; a freedom of thought, and rank in scale of being, such as no laws, no charters, no

charities can secure; but which it must be the first aim of all Europe at this day to regain for her children.

Let me not be thought to speak wildly or extravagantly. It is verily this degradation of the operative into a machine, which, more than any other evil of the times, is leading the mass of the nations everywhere into vain, incoherent, destructive struggling for a freedom of which they cannot explain the nature to themselves. Their universal outcry against wealth, and against nobility, is not forced from them either by the pressure of famine, or the sting of mortified pride. These do much, and have done much in all ages; but the foundations of society were never yet shaken as they are at this day. It is not that men are ill fed, but that they have no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread, and therefore look to wealth as the only means of pleasure. It is not that men are pained by the scorn of the upper classes, but they cannot endure their own; for they feel that the kind of labor to which they are condemned is verily a degrading one, and makes them less than men. Never had the upper classes so much sympathy with the lower, or charity for them, as they have at this day, and yet never were they so much hated by them: for, of old, the separation between the noble and the poor was merely a wall built by law; now it is a veritable difference in level of standing, a precipice between upper and lower grounds in the field of humanity, and there is pestilential air at the bottom of it. I know not if a day is ever to come when the nature of right freedom will be understood, and when men will see that to obey another man, to labor for him, yield reverence to him or to his place, is not slavery. It is often the best kind of liberty—liberty from care. The man who says to one, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh,[5] has, in most cases, more sense of restraint and difficulty than the man who obeys him. The movements of the one are hindered by the burden on his shoulder; of the other, by the bridle on his lips: there is no way by which the burden may be lightened; but we need not suffer from the bridle if we do not champ at it. To yield reverence to another, to hold ourselves and our lives at his disposal, is not slavery; often, it is the noblest state in which a

man can live in this world. There is, indeed, a reverence which is servile, that is to say irrational or selfish: but there is also noble reverence, that is to say, reasonable and loving; and a man is never so noble as when he is reverent in this kind; nay, even if the feeling pass the bounds of mere reason, so that it be loving, a man is raised by it. Which had, in reality, most of the serf nature in him—the Irish peasant who was lying in wait yesterday for his landlord, with his musket muzzle thrust through the ragged hedge; or that old mountain servant, who, 200 years ago, at Inverkeithing, gave up his own life and the lives of his seven sons for his chief?[6]—as each fell, calling forth his brother to the death, "Another for Hector!" And therefore, in all ages and all countries, reverence has been paid and sacrifice made by men to each other, not only without complaint, but rejoicingly; and famine, and peril, and sword, and all evil, and all shame, have been borne willingly in the causes of masters and kings; for all these gifts of the heart ennobled the men who gave not less than the men who received them, and nature prompted, and God rewarded the sacrifice. But to feel their souls withering within them, unthanked, to find their whole being sunk into an unrecognized abyss, to be counted off into a heap of mechanism, numbered with its wheels, and weighed with its hammer strokes—this nature bade not—this God blesses not—this humanity for no long time is able to endure.

We have much studied and much perfected, of late, the great civilized invention of the division of labour; only we give it a false name. It is not, truly speaking, the labour that is divided; but the men: Divided into mere segments of men—broken into small fragments and crumbs of life; so that all the little piece of intelligence that is left in a man is not enough to make a pin, or a nail, but exhausts itself in making the point of a pin, or the head of a nail. Now it is a good and desirable thing, truly, to make many pins in a day; but if we could only see with what crystal sand their points were polished—sand of human soul, much to be magnified before it can be discerned for what it is—we should think there might be some loss in it also. And the great cry that rises from all our

manufacturing cities, louder than their furnace blast, is all in very deed for this—that we manufacture everything there except men; we blanch cotton, and strengthen steel, and refine sugar, and shape pottery; but to brighten, to strengthen, to refine, or to form a single living spirit, never enters into our estimate of advantages. And all the evil to which that cry is urging our myriads can be met only in one way: not by teaching nor preaching, for to teach them is but to show them their misery, and to preach to them, if we do nothing more than preach, is to mock at it. It can be met only by a right understanding, on the part of all classes, of what kinds of labour are good for men, raising them, and making them happy; by a determined sacrifice of such convenience, or beauty, or cheapness as is to be got only by the degradation of the workman; and by equally determined demand for the products and results of healthy and ennobling labour.

And how, it will be asked, are these products to be recognized, and this demand to be regulated? Easily: by the observance of three broad and simple rules:

1. Never encourage the manufacture of any article not absolutely necessary, in the production of which *Invention* has no share.

2. Never demand an exact finish for its own sake, but only for some practical or noble end.

3. Never encourage imitation or copying of any kind, except for the sake of preserving record of great works.

The second of these principles is the only one which directly rises out of the consideration of our immediate subject; but I shall briefly explain the meaning and extent of the first also, reserving the enforcement of the third for another place.

1. Never encourage the manufacture of anything not necessary, in the production of which invention has no share.

For instance. Glass beads are utterly unnecessary, and there is no design or thought employed in their manufacture. They are formed by first drawing out the glass into rods; these rods are chopped up into fragments of the size of beads by the human hand, and the fragments are then rounded in the furnace. The men who chop up

the rods sit at their work all day, their hands vibrating with a perpetual and exquisitely timed palsy, and the beads dropping beneath their vibration like hail. Neither they, nor the men who draw out the rods or fuse the fragments, have the smallest occasion for the use of any single human faculty; and every young lady, therefore, who buys glass beads is engaged in the slave trade, and in a much more cruel one than that which we have so long been endeavouring to put down.[7]

But glass cups and vessels may become the subjects of exquisite invention; and if in buying these we pay for the invention, that is to say for the beautiful form, or color, or engraving, and not for mere finish of execution, we are doing good to humanity.

So, again, the cutting of precious stones, in all ordinary cases, requires little exertion of any mental faculty; some tact and judgment in avoiding flaws, and so on, but nothing to bring out the whole mind. Every person who wears cut jewels merely for the sake of their value is, therefore, a slave driver.

But the working of the goldsmith, and the various designing of grouped jewelry and enamel-work, may become the subject of the most noble human intelligence. Therefore, money spent in the purchase of well-designed plate, of precious engraved vases, cameos, or enamels, does good to humanity; and, in work of this kind, jewels may be employed to heighten its splendor; and their cutting is then a price paid for the attainment of a noble end, and thus perfectly allowable.

I shall perhaps press this law farther elsewhere, but our immediate concern is chiefly with the second, namely, never to demand an exact finish, when it does not lead to a noble end. For observe, I have only dwelt upon the rudeness of Gothic, or any other kind of imperfectness, as admirable, where it was impossible to get design or thought without it. If you are to have the thought of a rough and untaught man, you must have it in a rough and untaught way; but from an educated man, who can without effort express his thoughts in an educated way, take the graceful expression, and be thankful. Only *get* the thought, and do not silence the peasant

because he cannot speak good grammar, or until you have taught him his grammar. Grammar and refinement are good things, both, only be sure of the better thing first. And thus in art, delicate finish is desirable from the greatest masters, and is always given by them. In some places Michael Angelo, Leonardo, Phidias, Perugino, Turner[8] all finished with the most exquisite care; and the finish they give always leads to the fuller accomplishment of their noble purposes. But lower men than these cannot finish, for it requires consummate knowledge to finish consummately, and then we must take their thoughts as they are able to give them. So the rule is simple: Always look for invention first, and after that, for such execution as will help the invention, and as the inventor is capable of without painful effort, and *no more.* Above all, demand no refinement of execution where there is no thought, for that is slaves' work, unredeemed. Rather choose rough work than smooth work, so only that the practical purpose be answered, and never imagine there is reason to be proud of anything that may be accomplished by patience and sandpaper.

I shall only give one example, which however will show the reader what I mean, from the manufacture already alluded to, that of glass. Our modern glass is exquisitely clear in its substance, true in its form, accurate in its cutting. We are proud of this. We ought to be ashamed of it. The old Venice glass was muddy, inaccurate in all its forms, and clumsily cut, if at all. And the old Venetian was justly proud of it. For there is this difference between the English and Venetian workman, that the former thinks only of accurately matching his patterns, and getting his curves perfectly true and his edges perfectly sharp, and becomes a mere machine for rounding curves and sharpening edges, while the old Venetian cared not a whit whether his edges were sharp or not, but he invented a new design for every glass that he made, and never molded a handle or a lip without a new fancy in it. And therefore, though some Venetian glass is ugly and clumsy enough, when made by clumsy and uninventive workmen, other Venetian glass is so lovely in its forms that no price is too great for it; and we never see the same form in it

twice. Now you cannot have the finish and the varied form too. If the workman is thinking about his edges, he cannot be thinking of his design; if of his design, he cannot think of his edges. Choose whether you will pay for the lovely form or the perfect finish, and choose at the same moment whether you will make the worker a man or a grindstone.

Nay, but the reader interrupts me—"If the workman can design beautifully, I would not have him kept at the furnace. Let him be taken away and made a gentleman, and have a studio, and design his glass there, and I will have it blown and cut for him by common workmen, and so I will have my design and my finish too."

All ideas of this kind are founded upon two mistaken suppositions: the first, that one man's thoughts can be, or ought to be, executed by another man's hands; the second, that manual labor is a degradation, when it is governed by intellect.

On a large scale, and in work determinable by line and rule, it is indeed both possible and necessary that the thoughts of one man should be carried out by the labor of others; in this sense I have already defined the best architecture to be the expression of the mind of manhood by the hands of childhood. But on a smaller scale, and in a design which cannot be mathematically defined, one man's thoughts can never be expressed by another: and the difference between the spirit of touch of the man who is inventing, and of the man who is obeying directions, is often all the difference between a great and a common work of art. How wide the separation is between original and secondhand execution, I shall endeavor to show elsewhere; it is not so much to our purpose here as to mark the other and more fatal error of despising manual labor when governed by intellect; for it is no less fatal an error to despise it when thus regulated by intellect, than to value it for its own sake. We are always in these days endeavoring to separate the two; we want one man to be always thinking, and another to be always working, and we call one a gentleman, and the other an operative; whereas the workman ought often to be thinking, and the thinker often to be working, and both should be gentlemen, in the best

sense. As it is, we make both ungentle, the one envying, the other despising, his brother; and the mass of society is made up of morbid thinkers, and miserable workers. Now it is only by labor that thought can be made healthy, and only by thought that labor can be made happy, and the two cannot be separated with impunity. It would be well if all of us were good handicraftsmen in some kind, and the dishonor of manual labor done away with altogether; so that though there should still be a trenchant distinction of race between nobles and commoners, there should not, among the latter, be a trenchant distinction of employment, as between idle and working men, or between men of liberal and illiberal professions. All professions should be liberal, and there should be less pride felt in peculiarity of employment, and more in excellence of achievement. And yet more, in each several[9] profession, no master should be too proud to do its hardest work. The painter should grind his own colours; the architect work in the mason's yard with his men; the master manufacturer be himself a more skillful operative than any man in his mills; and the distinction between one man and another be only in experience and skill, and the authority and wealth which these must naturally and justly obtain.

I should be led far from the matter in hand, if I were to pursue this interesting subject. Enough, I trust, has been said to show the reader that the rudeness or imperfection which at first rendered the term "Gothic" one of reproach is indeed, when rightly understood, one of the most noble characters of Christian architecture, and not only a noble but an *essential* one. It seems a fantastic paradox, but it is nevertheless a most important truth, that no architecture can be truly noble which is *not* imperfect. And this is easily demonstrable. For since the architect, whom we will suppose capable of doing all in perfection, cannot execute the whole with his own hands, he must either make slaves of his workmen in the old Greek, and present English fashion, and level his work to a slave's capacities, which is to degrade it; or else he must take his workmen as he finds them, and let them show their weaknesses together with their strength, which

will involve the Gothic imperfection, but render the whole work as noble as the the intellect of the age can make it.

But the principle may be stated more broadly still. I have confined the illustration of it to architecture, but I must not leave it as if true of architecture only. Hitherto I have used the words imperfect and perfect merely to distinguish between work grossly unskillful, and work executed with average precision and science; and I have been pleading that any degree of unskillfulness should be admitted, so only that the laborer's mind had room for expression. But, accurately speaking, no good work whatever can be perfect, and *the demand for perfection is always a sign of a misunderstanding of the ends of art.*

This for two reasons, both based on everlasting laws. The first, that no great man ever stops working till he has reached his point of failure; that is to say, his mind is always far in advance of his powers of execution, and the latter will now and then give way in trying to follow it; besides that he will always give to the inferior portions of his work only such inferior attention as they require; and according to his greatness he becomes so accustomed to the feeling of dissatisfaction with the best he can do, that in moments of lassitude or anger with himself he will not care though the beholder be dissatisfied also. I believe there has only been one man who would not acknowledge this necessity, and strove always to reach perfection, Leonardo; the end of his vain effort being merely that he would take ten years to a picture, and leave it unfinished. And therefore, if we are to have great men working at all, or less men doing their best, the work will be imperfect, however beautiful. Of human work none but what is bad can be perfect, in its own bad way.[1]

The second reason is that imperfection is in some sort essential to all that we know of life. It is the sign of life in a mortal body, that is to say, of a state of progress and change. Nothing that lives is, or can be, rigidly perfect; part of it is decaying, part nascent. The foxglove blossom—a third part bud, a third part past, a third part in full bloom—is a type of the life of this world. And in all things that

live there are certain irregularities and deficiencies which are not only signs of life, but sources of beauty. No human face is exactly the same in its lines on each side, no leaf perfect in its lobes, no branch in its symmetry. All admit irregularity as they imply change; and to banish imperfection is to destroy expression, to check exertion, to paralyze vitality. All things are literally better, lovelier, and more beloved for the imperfections which have been divinely appointed, that the law of human life may be Effort, and the law of human judgment, Mercy.

Accept this then for a universal law, that neither architecture nor any other noble work of man can be good unless it be imperfect; and let us be prepared for the otherwise strange fact, which we shall discern clearly as we approach the period of the Renaissance, that the first cause of the fall of the arts of Europe was a relentless requirement of perfection, incapable alike either of being silenced by veneration for greatness, or softened into forgiveness of simplicity.

Thus far then of the Rudeness or Savageness, which is the first mental element of Gothic architecture. It is an element in many other healthy architectures also, as in Byzantine and Romanesque; but true Gothic cannot exist without it.

1851–53

Endnotes

- Note 1: From vol. 2, chap. 6.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Lack of refinement, roughness. "Goths": a Germanic people who by the 3rd century C.E. had settled north of the Black Sea.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Renaissance architecture, based on imitating classical buildings, was distasteful to Ruskin. He later stated that his aim in *The Stones of Venice* had been "to show that the Gothic architecture of Venice had risen out of . . . a state of pure national faith and domestic virtue; and that its Renaissance

architecture had arisen out of . . . a state of concealed national infidelity and domestic corruption."Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Hot wind from the southern Mediterranean.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Ornamental, or embossed. "Chased": decorated.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A breed of pony from the Shetland Isles.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Imbued with as an animating force.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Lesser.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A class of serfs in ancient Sparta.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Trees with top branches cut back to the trunk.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare with Job 19:26: "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Fanciful, imaginative.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Devoid of anatomy (Ruskin's coinage).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Matthew 8:9.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: An incident described in the preface to the novel *The Fair Maid of Perth* (1828) by Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832). Inverkeithing is a town in Fife, Scotland.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Although the Atlantic slave trade had been outlawed early in the 19th century, transatlantic trafficking in enslaved African people continued until slavery was made illegal everywhere in the Americas.Return to reference 7
- Note 8:
  All notable artists. Michelangelo (1475–1564), Italian sculptor, painter, and architect. Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), Italian painter, sculptor, and scientist. Phidias (born ca. 490 B.C.E.), an Athenian often called the greatest Greek sculptor. Perugino (Pietro di Cristoforo Vannucci, ca. 1450–1523). J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851), British painter.
  Return to reference 8

- Note 9: Different.Return to reference 9
- Note 1:
  The Elgin marbles are supposed by many persons to be "perfect." In the most important portions they indeed approach perfection, but only there. The draperies are unfinished, the hair and wool of the animals are unfinished, and the entire bas-reliefs of the frieze are roughly cut [*Ruskin's note*]. Ruskin is referring to the collection of statues and friezes brought from Athens to England by Lord Elgin, works that were considered models of perfect realism.
  Return to reference 1

GEORGE ELIOT
1819–1880

In an era of great novelists, George Eliot stands out for her commitment to the novel both as a work of art and as a way to consider pressing philosophical, social, and psychological questions. Her particular version of realism, with its minute attention to the sometimes-conflicting effects of desire, circumstance, character, and impulse, had an enormous impact on the development of the novel form, and it reflects her sense of the moral seriousness of novel-writing and novel-reading: its power to facilitate but also call attention to the difficulties inherent in mutual understanding.

Mary Anne Evans (Eliot's birth name) spent her first two decades in a rural area in the middle of England. Here, living at Arbury Farm, where her father, Robert Evans, was supervisor and land agent, Evans read widely in and out of school, and was also strongly affected by Evangelicalism. Her mother's death led to her leaving school at sixteen, and in the next four or five years she seems to have experienced bouts of depression and self-doubt. At the age of twenty-one Evans moved with her father to the town of Coventry, and in this new setting her intellectual horizons were extensively widened. As the result of her association with a group of freethinking intellectuals, and her own studies of theology, she reluctantly decided that she could no longer believe in orthodox Christianity. She maintained a commitment to what she regarded as Christian values, but she rejected the supernatural elements of the

Bible. Her position created a painful break with her father, finally resolved when she agreed to continue to attend church with him, and he agreed, tacitly at least, that while there she could think what she liked.

These preoccupations with theological issues led to her translation in 1846 of *The Life of Jesus* by D. F. Strauss, and in 1854 of Ludwig Feuerbach's E*ssence of Christianity.* Both are examples of "Higher Criticism"—an approach to Biblical study that originated in Germany and that sought to demystify Christianity while preserving the "essence" or kernel of Christian belief. Eliot also translated Spinoza's *Ethics* (1856), a philosophical treatise on the nature of mind, God, and society. The concerns reflected in this early work—of how to maintain social order and human values in the absence of a strong belief in a Christian God—recur throughout her career. For the rest of her life, Evans continued to read extensively in English and continental philosophy; and when she moved to London in 1851, after her father's death, her impressive intellectual credentials led to her appointment as an assistant editor of the *Westminster Review,* a learned journal formerly edited by John Stuart Mill.

Her work at the *Review* brought her into contact with many important writers and thinkers. Among them was George Henry Lewes, a brilliant critic of literature and philosophy, with whom she fell in love. Lewes, a married man and father of three children, could not obtain a divorce. Evans elected to live with him as a common-law wife, and their relationship lasted happily until his death in 1878. In the last year of her life, she married an admirer and friend, J. W. Cross, who became her biographer.

Eliot's decision to live with Lewes was difficult: "Light and easily broken ties are what I neither desire theoretically nor could live for practically. Women who are satisfied with such ties do *not* act as I have done—they obtain what they desire and are still invited to dinner." As she predicted, Eliot was *not* invited to dinner, and she had to sacrifice a number of social and family ties as a result of her choice. Among these was her relationship with her brother, Isaac, to whom she had been deeply attached since childhood. Isaac never

spoke to her again after her elopement with Lewes. It is reasonable to conjecture that this experience is one of the sources of the emphasis, in all her novels, on incidents involving choice. All her characters are tested by situations in which they must choose, and the choices, as in *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), are often agonizingly painful.

Although she had occasionally tried her hand at fiction earlier in life, it was only after her relationship with Lewes became established that she turned her full attention to this form. *Scenes from Clerical Life* appeared in magazine installments in 1857 under the pen name that misled most of her readers (Dickens excepted) into believing the author to be a man—a "university man," it was commonly said, to Eliot's amusement and satisfaction. This work was followed by seven full-length novels in the 1860s and 1870s, most of which repeated the success of *Adam Bede* (1859) with the Victorian reading public. Virginia Woolf praised *Middlemarch* (1871–72) as "one of the few English novels written for grownup people," and later readers have found a similar maturity combined with a powerful creative energy in other novels by Eliot such as *The Mill on the Floss* and *Daniel Deronda* (1876).

When Eliot began writing fiction, she and Lewes were reading to each other the novels of Jane Austen. Eliot's fiction owes much to Austen's with its concern with provincial society, its satire of human motives, its focus on courtship. But Eliot's fiction typically combines expansive philosophic meditation with an acute dissection of her characters' motives and feelings. As she wrote in an early essay entitled "The Natural History of German Life" (1856),

> The greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet, or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies. Appeals founded on generalizations and statistics require a sympathy ready-made, a moral sentiment already in activity; but a picture of human life such as a great artist can give, surprises even the trivial and the selfish into that attention to what is apart from themselves, which may be called the raw material of moral sentiment. . . . Art is the nearest thing to life; it is a

> mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot.

This understanding of the social and ethical work of realism permeates all her work: Eliot strives to present her fiction as a mirror that reflects our experience of life without distortion. At the same time, however, her insistence on art's transparency is often troubled both by her consciousness of its fictions and by her sense of the way in which the egoism we all share distorts our perceptions. Hence she portrays this egoism with a combination of acuity and compassion.

Like Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, William Thackeray, and other contemporary novelists, Eliot poses considerable difficulties for the anthologist due to the sheer length of most of her fictions. The goal of many of her novels is to capture the dynamics of an entire community. As a result, editions of *Middlemarch* typically run six or seven hundred pages, and *Daniel Deronda* is closer to eight. For the purposes of this anthology, therefore, we have chosen to reprint Eliot's novella *The Lifted Veil*. While it may not be typical of her work in its supernaturalism, its concerns with the unpredictable relationship between knowledge or sympathy and compassion is characteristic of concerns that recur throughout her career.

The Lifted Veil

CHAPTER I

The time of my end approaches. I have lately been subject to attacks of *angina pectoris*;[1] and in the ordinary course of things, my physician tells me, I may fairly hope that my life will not be protracted many months. Unless, then, I am cursed with an exceptional physical constitution, as I am cursed with an exceptional mental character, I shall not much longer groan under the wearisome burthen of this earthly existence. If it were to be otherwise—if I were to live on to the age most men desire and provide for—I should for once have known whether the miseries of delusive expectation can outweigh the miseries of true prevision. For I foresee when I shall die, and everything that will happen in my last moments.

Just a month from this day, on the 20th of September 1850, I shall be sitting in this chair, in this study, at ten o'clock at night, longing to die, weary of incessant insight and foresight, without delusions and without hope. Just as I am watching a tongue of blue flame rising in the fire, and my lamp is burning low, the horrible contraction will begin at my chest. I shall only have time to reach the bell, and pull it violently, before the sense of suffocation will come. No one answers my bell. I know why. My two servants are lovers, and will have quarrelled. My housekeeper will have rushed out of the house in a fury, two hours before, hoping that Perry will believe she has gone to drown herself. Perry is alarmed at last, and is gone out after her. The little scullery-maid is asleep on a bench: she never answers the bell; it does not wake her. The sense of suffocation increases: my lamp goes out with a horrible stench: I make a great effort, and snatch at the bell again. I long for life, and there is no help. I thirsted for the unknown: the thirst is gone. O God, let me stay with the known, and be weary of it: I am content. Agony of pain and suffocation—and all the while the earth, the fields, the pebbly brook at the bottom of the rookery, the fresh scent after the rain, the light of the morning through my chamber window,

the warmth of the hearth after the frosty air—will darkness close over them for ever?

Darkness—darkness—no pain—nothing but darkness: but I am passing on and on through the darkness: my thought stays in the darkness, but always with a sense of moving onward. . . .

Before that time comes, I wish to use my last hours of ease and strength in telling the strange story of my experience. I have never fully un-bosomed myself to any human being; I have never been encouraged to trust much in the sympathy of my fellow-men. But we have all a chance of meeting with some pity, some tenderness, some charity, when we are dead: it is the living only who cannot be forgiven—the living only from whom men's indulgence and reverence are held off, like the rain by the hard east wind. While the heart beats, bruise it—it is your only opportunity; while the eye can still turn towards you with moist timid entreaty, freeze it with an icy un-answering gaze; while the ear, that delicate messenger to the inmost sanctuary of the soul, can still take in the tones of kindness, put it off with hard civility, or sneering compliment, or envious affectation of indifference; while the creative brain can still throb with the sense of injustice, with the yearning for brotherly recognition—make haste—oppress it with your ill-considered judgments, your trivial comparisons, your careless misrepresentations. The heart will by-and-by be still—*ubi sæva indignatio ulterius cor lacerare nequit*;[2] the eye will cease to entreat; the ear will be deaf; the brain will have ceased from all wants as well as from all work. Then your charitable speeches may find vent; then you may remember and pity the toil and the struggle and the failure; then you may give due honour to the work achieved; then you may find extenuation for errors, and consent to bury them.

That is a trivial schoolboy text; why do I dwell on it? It has little reference to me, for I shall leave no works behind me for men to honour. I have no near relatives who will make up, by weeping over my grave, for the wounds they inflicted on me when I was among them. It is only the story of my life that will perhaps win a little more

sympathy from strangers when I am dead, than I ever believed it would obtain from my friends while I was living.

My childhood perhaps seems happier to me than it really was, by contrast with all the after years. For then the curtain of the future was as impenetrable to me as to other children: I had all their delight in the present hour, their sweet indefinite hopes for the morrow; and I had a tender mother: even now, after the dreary lapse of long years, a slight trace of sensation accompanies the remembrance of her caress as she held me on her knee—her arms round my little body, her cheek pressed on mine. I had a complaint of the eyes that made me blind for a little while, and she kept me on her knee from morning till night. That unequalled love soon vanished out of my life, and even to my childish consciousness it was as if that life had become more chill. I rode my little white pony with the groom by my side as before, but there were no loving eyes looking at me as I mounted, no glad arms opened to me when I came back. Perhaps I missed my mother's love more than most children of seven or eight would have done, to whom the other pleasures of life remained as before; for I was certainly a very sensitive child. I remember still the mingled trepidation and delicious excitement with which I was affected by the tramping of the horses on the pavement in the echoing stables, by the loud resonance of the grooms' voices, by the booming bark of the dogs as my father's carriage thundered under the archway of the courtyard, by the din of the gong as it gave notice of luncheon and dinner. The measured tramp of soldiery which I sometimes heard—for my father's house lay near a county town where there were large barracks—made me sob and tremble; and yet when they were gone past, I longed for them to come back again.

I fancy my father thought me an odd child, and had little fondness for me; though he was very careful in fulfilling what he regarded as a parent's duties. But he was already past the middle of life, and I was not his only son. My mother had been his second wife, and he was five-and-forty when he married her. He was a firm, unbending, intensely orderly man, in root and stem a banker, but

with a flourishing graft of the active landholder, aspiring to county influence: one of those people who are always like themselves from day to day, who are uninfluenced by the weather, and neither know melancholy nor high spirits. I held him in great awe, and appeared more timid and sensitive in his presence than at other times; a circumstance which, perhaps, helped to confirm him in the intention to educate me on a different plan from the prescriptive one with which he had complied in the case of my elder brother, already a tall youth at Eton.[3] My brother was to be his representative and successor; he must go to Eton and Oxford, for the sake of making connections, of course; my father was not a man to underrate the bearing of Latin satirists or Greek dramatists[4] on the attainment of an aristocratic position. But, intrinsically, he had slight esteem for "those dead but aceptred spirits;" having qualified himself for forming an independent opinion by reading Potter's *Æschylus,* and dipping into Francis's *Horace*.[5] To this negative view he added a positive one, derived from a recent connection with mining speculations; namely, that a scientific education was the really useful training for a younger son. Moreover, it was clear that a shy, sensitive boy like me was not fit to encounter the rough experience of a public school.[6] Mr Letherall had said so very decidedly. Mr Letherall was a large man in spectacles, who one day took my small head between his large hands, and pressed it here and there in an exploratory, suspicious manner—then placed each of his great thumbs on my temples, and pushed me a little way from him, and stared at me with glittering spectacles. The contemplation appeared to displease him, for he frowned sternly, and said to my father, drawing his thumbs across my eyebrows,

"The deficiency is there, sir—there; and here," he added, touching the upper sides of my head, "here is the excess. That must be brought out, sir, and this must be laid to sleep."[7]

I was in a state of tremor, partly at the vague idea that I was the object of reprobation, partly in the agitation of my first hatred—hatred of this big, spectacled man, who pulled my head about as if he wanted to buy and cheapen it.

I am not aware how much Mr Letherall had to do with the system afterwards adopted towards me, but it was presently clear that private tutors, natural history, science, and the modern languages, were the appliances by which the defects of my organisation were to be remedied. I was very stupid about machines, so I was to be greatly occupied with them; I had no memory for classification, so it was particularly necessary that I should study systematic zoology and botany; I was hungry for human deeds and human emotions, so I was to be plentifully crammed with the mechanical powers, the elementary bodies, and the phenomena of electricity and magnetism. A better-constituted boy would certainly have profited under my intelligent tutors, with their scientific apparatus; and would, doubtless, have found the phenomena of electricity and magnetism as fascinating as I was, every Thursday, assured they were. As it was, I could have paired off, for ignorance of whatever was taught me, with the worst Latin scholar that was ever turned out of a classical academy; whence I have been led to conclude that the only universal rule with regard to education is, that no rule should be held universal, a good education being that which adapts itself to individual wants and faculties. I read Plutarch, and Shakespeare, and Don Quixote[8] by the sly, and supplied myself in that way with wandering thoughts, while my tutor was assuring me that "an improved man, as distinguished from an ignorant one, was a man who knew the reason why water ran down-hill." I had no desire to be this improved man; I was glad of the running water; I could watch it and listen to it gurgling among the pebbles, and bathing the bright green water-plants, by the hour together. I did not want to know *why* it ran; I had perfect confidence that there were good reasons for what was so very beautiful.

There is no need to dwell on this part of my life. I have said enough to indicate that my nature was of the sensitive, unpractical order, and that it grew up in an uncongenial medium, which could never foster it into happy, healthy development. When I was sixteen I was sent to Geneva to complete my course of education; and the change was a very happy one to me, for the first sight of the Alps,

with the setting sun on them, as we descended the Jura, seemed to me like an entrance into heaven; and the three years of my life there were spent in a perpetual sense of exaltation, as if from a draught of delicious wine, at the presence of Nature in all her awful loveliness. You will think, perhaps, that I must have been a poet, from this early sensibility to Nature. But my lot was not so happy as that. A poet pours forth his song and *believes* in the listening ear and answering soul, to which his song will be floated sooner or later. But the poet's sensibility without his voice—the poet's sensibility that finds no vent but in silent tears on the sunny bank, when the noonday light sparkles on the water, or in an inward shudder at the sound of harsh human tones, the sight of a cold human eye—this dumb passion brings with it a fatal solitude of soul in the society of one's fellow-men. My least solitary moments were those in which I pushed off in my boat, at evening, towards the centre of the lake; it seemed to me that the sky, and the glowing mountain-tops, and the wide blue water, surrounded me with a cherishing love such as no human face had shed on me since my mother's love had vanished out of my life. I used to do as Jean Jacques[9] did—lie down in my boat and let it glide where it would, while I looked up at the departing glow leaving one mountain-top after the other, as if the prophet's chariot of fire were passing over them on its way to the home of light. Then, when the white summits were all sad and corpse-like, I had to push homeward, for I was under careful surveillance, and was allowed no late wanderings. This disposition of mine was not favourable to the formation of intimate friendships among the numerous youths of my own age who are always to be found studying at Geneva. Yet I made *one* such friendship; and, singularly enough, it was with a youth whose intellectual tendencies were the very reverse of my own. I shall call him Charles Meunier; his real surname—an English one, for he was of English extraction—having since become celebrated. He was an orphan, who lived on a miserable pittance while he pursued the medical studies for which he had a special genius. Strange; that with my vague mind, impressionable and unobservant, hating inquiry and given up to contemplation, I should

have been drawn towards a youth whose strongest passion was science. But the bond was not an intellectual one; it came from a source that can happily blend the stupid with the brilliant, the dreamy with the practical: it came from community of feeling. Charles was poor and ugly, derided by Genevese *gamins,*[1] and not acceptable in drawing-rooms. I saw that he was isolated, as I was, though from a different cause, and, stimulated by a sympathetic resentment, I made timid advances towards him. It is enough to say that there sprang up as much *camaraderie* between us as our different habits would allow; and in Charles's rare holidays we went up the Salève together, or took the boat to Vevay, while I listened dreamily to the monologues in which he unfolded his bold conceptions of future experiment and discovery. I mingled them confusedly in my thought with glimpses of blue water and delicate floating cloud, with the notes of birds and the distant glitter of the glacier. He knew quite well that my mind was half absent, yet he liked to talk to me in this way; for don't we talk of our hopes and our projects even to dogs and birds, when they love us? I have mentioned this one friendship because of its connection with a strange and terrible scene which I shall have to narrate in my subsequent life.

This happier life at Geneva was put an end to by a terrible illness, which is partly a blank to me, partly a time of dimly-remembered suffering, with the presence of my father by my bed from time to time. Then came the languid monotony of convalescence, the days gradually breaking into variety and distinctness as my strength enabled me to take longer and longer drives. On one of these more vividly remembered days, my father said to me, as he sat beside my sofa,

"When you are quite well enough to travel, Latimer, I shall take you home with me. The journey will amuse you and do you good, for I shall go through the Tyrol and Austria, and you will see many new places. Our neighbours, the Filmores, are come; Alfred will join us at Basle, and we shall all go together to Vienna, and back by Prague" . . .

My father was called away before he had finished his sentence, and he left my mind resting on the word *Prague,* with a strange sense that a new and wondrous scene was breaking upon me: a city under the broad sunshine, that seemed to me as if it were the summer sunshine of a long-past century arrested in its course—unrefreshed for ages by the dews of night, or the rushing rain-cloud; scorching the dusty, weary, time-eaten grandeur of a people doomed to live on in the stale repetition of memories, like deposed and superannuated kings, in their regal gold-inwoven tatters. The city looked so thirsty that the broad river seemed to me a sheet of metal; and the blackened statues, as I passed under their blank gaze, along the unending bridge, with their ancient garments and their saintly crowns, seemed to me the real inhabitants and owners of this place, while the busy, trivial men and women, hurrying to and fro, were a swarm of ephemeral visitants infesting it for a day. It is such grim, stony beings as these, I thought, who are the fathers of ancient faded children, in those tanned time-fretted dwellings that crowd the steep before me; who pay their court in the worn and crumbling pomp of the palace which stretches its monotonous length on the height; who worship wearily in the stifling air of the churches, urged by no fear or hope, but compelled by their doom to be ever old and undying, to live on in the rigidity of habit, as they live on in perpetual mid-day, without the repose of night or the new birth of morning.

A stunning clang of metal suddenly thrilled through me, and I became conscious of the objects in my room again: one of the fire-irons had fallen, as Pierre opened the door to bring me my draught. My heart was palpitating violently, and I begged Pierre to leave my draught[2] beside me; I would take it presently.

As soon as I was alone again, I began to ask myself whether I had been sleeping. Was this a dream—this wonderfully distinct vision—minute in its distinctness down to a patch of coloured light on the pavement, transmitted through a coloured lamp in the shape of a star—of a strange city, quite unfamiliar to my imagination? I had seen no picture of Prague: it lay in my mind as a mere name, with

vaguely remembered historical associations—ill-defined memories of imperial grandeur and religious wars.

Nothing of this sort had ever occurred in my dreaming experience before, for I had often been humiliated because my dreams were only saved from being utterly disjointed and commonplace by the frequent terrors of nightmare. But I could not believe that I had been asleep, for I remembered distinctly the gradual breaking-in of the vision upon me, like the new images in a dissolving view, or, the growing distinctness of the landscape as the sun lifts up the veil of the morning mist. And while I was conscious of this incipient vision, I was also conscious that Pierre came to tell my father Mr Filmore was waiting for him, and that my father hurried out of the room. No, it was not a dream; was it—the thought was full of tremulous exultation—was it the poet's nature in me, hitherto only a troubled, yearning sensibility, now manifesting itself suddenly as spontaneous creation? Surely it was in this way that Homer saw the plain of Troy, that Dante saw the abodes of the departed, that Milton[3] saw the earthward flight of the Tempter. Was it that my illness had wrought some happy change in my organisation—given a firmer tension to my nerves—carried off some dull obstruction? I had often read of such effects—in works of fiction at least. Nay; in genuine biographies I had read of the subtilising or exalting influence of some diseases on the mental powers. Did not Novalis[4] feel his inspiration intensified under the progress of consumption?

When my mind had dwelt for some time on this blissful idea, it seemed to me that I might perhaps test it by an exertion of my will. The vision had commenced when my father was speaking of our going to Prague. I did not for a moment believe it was really a representation of that city; I believed—I hoped it was a picture that my newly-liberated genius had painted in fiery haste, with the colours snatched from lazy memory. Suppose I were to fix my mind on some other place—Venice, for example, which was far more familiar to my imagination than Prague: perhaps the same sort of result would follow. I concentrated my thoughts on Venice; I

stimulated my imagination with poetic memories, and strove to feel myself present in Venice, as I had felt myself present in Prague. But in vain. I was only colouring the Canaletto[5] engravings that hung in my old bedroom at home; the picture was a shifting one, my mind wandering uncertainly in search of more vivid images; I could see no accident of form or shadow without conscious labour after the necessary conditions. It was all prosaic effort, not rapt passivity, such as I had experienced half an hour before. I was discouraged; but I remembered that inspiration was fitful.

For several days I was in a state of excited expectation, watching for a recurrence of my new gift. I sent my thoughts ranging over my world of knowledge, in the hope that they would find some object which would send a reawakening vibration through my slumbering genius. But no; my world remained as dim as ever, and that flash of strange light refused to come again, though I watched for it with palpitating eagerness.

My father accompanied me every day in a drive, and a gradually lengthening walk as my powers of walking increased; and one evening he had agreed to come and fetch me at twelve the next day, that we might go together to select a musical snuff-box, and other purchases, rigorously demanded of a rich Englishman visiting Geneva. He was one of the most punctual of men and bankers, and I was always nervously anxious to be quite ready for him at the appointed time. But, to my surprise, at a quarter past twelve he had not appeared. I felt all the impatience of a convalescent who has nothing particular to do, and who has just taken a tonic in the prospect of immediate exercise that would carry off the stimulus.

Unable to sit still and reserve my strength, I walked up and down the room, looking out on the current of the Rhone, just where it leaves the dark-blue lake; but thinking all the while of the possible causes that could detain my father.

Suddenly I was conscious that my father was in the room, but not alone; there were two persons with him. Strange! I had heard no footstep, I had not seen the door open; but I saw my father, and at his right hand our neighbour Mrs Filmore, whom I remembered

very well, though I had not seen her for five years. She was a commonplace middle-aged woman, in silk and cashmere; but the lady on the left of my father was not more than twenty, a tall, slim, willowy figure, with luxuriant blond hair arranged in cunning braids and folds that looked almost too massive for the slight figure and the small-featured, thin-lipped face they crowned. But the face had not a girlish expression: the features were sharp, the pale grey eyes at once acute, restless, and sarcastic. They were fixed on me in half-smiling curiosity, and I felt a painful sensation as if a sharp wind were cutting me. The pale-green dress, and the green leaves that seemed to form a border about her blond hair, made me think of a Water-Nixie[6]—for my mind was full of German lyrics, and this pale, fatal-eyed woman, with the green weeds, looked like a birth from some cold, sedgy stream, the daughter of an aged river.

"Well, Latimer, you thought me long," my father said. . . .

But while the last word was in my ears, the whole group vanished, and there was nothing between me and the Chinese painted folding-screen that stood before the door. I was cold and trembling; I could only totter forward and throw myself on the sofa. This strange new power had manifested itself again. . . . . But *was* it a power? Might it not rather be a disease—a sort of intermittent delirium, concentrating my energy of brain into moments of unhealthy activity, and leaving my saner hours all the more barren? I felt a dizzy sense of unreality in what my eye rested on; I grasped the bell convulsively, like one trying to free himself from nightmare, and rang it twice. Pierre came with a look of alarm in his face.

"Monsieur ne se trouve pas bien?"[7] he said, anxiously.

"I'm tired of waiting, Pierre," I said, as distinctly and emphatically as I could, like a man determined to be sober in spite of wine; "I'm afraid something has happened to my father—he's usually so punctual. Run to the Hotel des Bergues and see if he is there."

Pierre left the room at once, with a soothing "Bien, Monsieur;" and I felt the better for this scene of simple, waking prose. Seeking to calm myself still further, I went into my bedroom, adjoining the salon, and opened a case of eau-de-cologne; took out a bottle; went

through the process of taking out the cork very neatly, and then rubbed the reviving spirit over my hands and forehead, and under my nostrils, drawing a new delight from the scent because I had procured it by slow details of labour, and by no strange sudden madness. Already I had begun to taste something of the horror that belongs to the lot of a human being whose nature is not adjusted to simple human conditions.

Still enjoying the scent, I returned to the salon, but it was not unoccupied, as it had been before I left it. In front of the Chinese folding-screen there was my father, with Mrs Filmore on his right hand, and on his left——the slim blond-haired girl, with the keen face and the keen eyes fixed on me in half-smiling curiosity.

"Well, Latimer, you thought me long," my father said. . . .

I heard no more, felt no more, till I became conscious that I was lying with my head low on the sofa, Pierre and my father by my side. As soon as I was thoroughly revived, my father left the room, and presently returned, saying,

"I've been to tell the ladies how you are, Latimer. They were waiting in the next room. We shall put off our shopping expedition to-day."

Presently he said, "That young lady is Bertha Grant, Mrs Filmore's orphan niece. Filmore has adopted her, and she lives with them, so you will have her for a neighbour when we go home—perhaps for a near relation; for there is a tenderness between her and Alfred, I suspect, and I should be gratified by the match, since Filmore means to provide for her in every way as if she were his daughter. It hadn't occurred to me that you knew nothing about her living with the Filmores."

He made no further allusion to the fact of my having fainted at the moment of seeing her, and I would not for the world have told him the reason: I shrank from the idea of disclosing to any one what might be regarded as a pitiable peculiarity, most of all from betraying it to my father, who would have suspected my sanity ever after.

I do not mean to dwell with particularity on the details of my experience. I have described these two cases at length, because

they had definite, clearly traceable results in my after lot.

Shortly after this last occurrence—I think the very next day—I began to be aware of a phase in my abnormal sensibility, to which, from the languid and slight nature of my intercourse with others since my illness, I had not been alive before. This was the obtrusion on my mind of the mental process going forward in first one person, and then another, with whom I happened to be in contact: the vagrant, frivolous ideas and emotions of some uninteresting acquaintance—Mrs Filmore, for example—would force themselves on my consciousness like an importunate, ill-played musical instrument, or the loud activity of an imprisoned insect. But this unpleasant sensibility was fitful, and left me moments of rest, when the souls of my companions were once more shut out from me, and I felt a relief such as silence brings to wearied nerves. I might have believed this importunate insight to be merely a diseased activity of the imagination, but that my prevision of incalculable words and actions proved it to have a fixed relation to the mental process in other minds. But this superadded consciousness, wearying and annoying enough when it urged on me the trivial experience of indifferent people, became an intense pain and grief when it seemed to be opening to me the souls of those who were in a close relation to me —when the rational talk, the graceful attentions, the bon-mots,[8] and the kindly deeds, which used to make the web of their characters, were seen as if thrust asunder by a microscopic vision, that showed all the intermediate frivolities, all the suppressed egoism, all the struggling chaos of puerilities, meanness, vague capricious memories, and indolent make-shift thoughts, from which human words and deeds emerge like leaflets covering a fermenting heap.

At Basle we were joined by my brother Alfred, now a handsome self-confident man of six-and-twenty—a thorough contrast to my fragile, nervous, ineffectual self. I believe I was held to have a sort of half-womanish, half-ghostly beauty; for the portrait-painters, who are thick as weeds at Geneva, had often asked me to sit to them, and I had been the model of a dying minstrel in a fancy picture. But I thoroughly disliked my own physique, and nothing but the belief

that it was a condition of poetic genius would have reconciled me to it. That brief hope was quite fled, and I saw in my face now nothing but the stamp of a morbid organisation, framed for passive suffering —too feeble for the sublime resistance of poetic production. Alfred, from whom I had been almost constantly separated, and who, in his present stage of character and appearance, came before me as a perfect stranger, was bent on being extremely friendly and brother-like to me. He had the superficial kindness of a good-humoured, self-satisfied nature, that fears no rivalry, and has encountered no contrarieties. I am not sure that my disposition was good enough for me to have been quite free from envy towards him, even if our desires had not clashed, and if I had been in the healthy human condition that admits of generous confidence and charitable construction. There must always have been an antipathy between our natures. As it was, he became in a few weeks an object of intense hatred to me; and when he entered the room, still more when he spoke, it was as if a sensation of grating metal had set my teeth on edge. My diseased consciousness was more intensely and continually occupied with his thoughts and emotions, than with those of any other person who came in my way. I was perpetually exasperated with the petty promptings of his conceit and his love of patronage, with his self-complacent belief in Bertha Grant's passion for him, with his half-pitying contempt for me—seen not in the ordinary indications of intonation and phrase and slight action, which an acute and suspicious mind is on the watch for, but in all their naked skinless complication.

For we were rivals, and our desires clashed, though he was not aware of it. I have said nothing yet of the effect Bertha Grant produced in me on a nearer acquaintance. That effect was chiefly determined by the fact that she made the only exception, among all the human beings about me, to my unhappy gift of insight. About Bertha I was always in a state of uncertainty; I could watch the expression of her face, and speculate on its meaning; I could ask for her opinion with the real interest of ignorance; I could listen for her words and watch for her smile with hope and fear: she had for me

the fascination of an unravelled destiny. I say it was this fact that chiefly determined the strong effect she produced on me: for, in the abstract, no womanly character could seem to have less sympathy with that of a shrinking, romantic, passionate youth than Bertha's. She was keen, sarcastic, unimaginative, prematurely cynical, remaining critical and unmoved in the most impressive scenes, inclined to dissect all my favourite poems, and, most of all, contemptuous towards the German lyrics, which were my pet literature at that time. To this moment I am unable to define my feeling towards her: it was not ordinary boyish admiration, for she was the very opposite, even to the colour of her hair, of the ideal woman who still remained to me the type of loveliness; and she was without that enthusiasm for the great and good, which, even at the moment of her strongest dominion over me, I should have declared to be the highest element of character. But there is no tyranny more complete than that which a self-centred negative nature exercises over a morbidly sensitive nature perpetually craving sympathy and support. The most independent people feel the effect of a man's silence in heightening their value for his opinion—feel an additional triumph in conquering the reverence of a critic habitually captious and satirical: no wonder, then, that an enthusiastic self-distrusting youth should watch and wait before the closed secret of a sarcastic woman's face, as if it were the shrine of the doubtfully benignant deity who ruled his destiny. For a young enthusiast is unable to imagine the total negation in another mind of the emotions that are stirring his own: they may be feeble, latent, inactive, he thinks, but they are there, they may be called forth—sometimes, in moments of happy hallucination, he believes they may be there in all the greater strength because he sees no outward sign of them. And this effect, as I have intimated, was heightened to its utmost intensity in me, because Bertha was the only being who remained for me in the mysterious seclusion of soul that renders such youthful delusion possible. Doubtless there was another sort of fascination at work—that subtle physical attraction which delights in cheating our psychological predictions, and in compelling the men who paint

sylphs, to fall in love with some *bonne et brave femme,*[9] heavy-heeled and freckled.

Bertha's behaviour towards me was such as to encourage all my illusions, to heighten my boyish passion, and make me more and more dependent on her smiles. Looking back with my present wretched knowledge, I conclude that her vanity and love of power were intensely gratified by the belief that I had fainted on first seeing her purely from the strong impression her person had produced on me. The most prosaic woman likes to believe herself the object of a violent, a poetic passion; and without a grain of romance in her, Bertha had that spirit of intrigue which gave piquancy to the idea that the brother of the man she meant to marry was dying with love and jealousy for her sake. That she meant to marry my brother, was what at that time I did not believe; for though he was assiduous in his attentions to her, and I knew well enough that both he and my father had made up their minds to this result, there was not yet an understood engagement—there had been no explicit declaration; and Bertha habitually, while she flirted with my brother, and accepted his homage in a way that implied to him a thorough recognition of its intention, made me believe, by the subtlest looks and phrases, slight feminine nothings that could never be quoted against her, that he was really the object of her secret ridicule; that she thought him, as I did, a coxcomb, whom she would have pleasure in disappointing. Me she openly petted in my brother's presence, as if I were too young and sickly ever to be thought of as a lover; and that was the view he took of me. But I believe she must inwardly have delighted in the tremors into which she threw me by the coaxing way in which she patted my curls, while she laughed at my quotations. Such caresses were always given in the presence of our friends, for when we were alone together, she affected a much greater distance towards me, and now and then took the opportunity, by words or slight actions, to stimulate my foolish timid hope that she really preferred me. And why should she not follow her inclination? I was not in so advantageous a position as my brother, but I had fortune, I was not a year younger than she was,

and she was an heiress, who would soon be of age to decide for herself.

The fluctuations of hope and fear, confined to this one channel, made each day in her presence a delicious torment. There was one deliberate act of hers which especially helped to intoxicate me. When we were at Vienna her twentieth birthday occurred, and as she was very fond of ornaments, we all took the opportunity of the splendid jewellers' shops in that Teutonic Paris, to purchase her a birthday present of jewellery. Mine, naturally, was the least expensive; it was an opal ring—the opal was my favourite stone, because it seems to blush and turn pale as if it had a soul. I told Bertha so when I gave it her, and said that it was an emblem of the poetic nature, changing with the changing light of heaven and of woman's eyes. In the evening she appeared elegantly dressed, and wearing conspicuously all the birthday presents except mine. I looked eagerly at her fingers, but saw no opal. I had no opportunity of noticing this to her during the evening; but the next day, when I found her seated near the window alone, after breakfast, I said, "You scorn to wear my poor opal. I should have remembered that you despised poetic natures, and should have given you coral, or turquoise, or some other opaque unresponsive stone." "Do I despise it?" she answered, taking hold of a delicate gold chain which she always wore round her neck and drawing out the end from her bosom with my ring hanging to it; "it hurts me a little, I can tell you, she said, with her usual dubious smile, "to wear it in that secret place; and since your poetical nature is so stupid as to prefer a more public position, I shall not endure the pain any longer."

She took off the ring from the chain and put it on her finger, smiling still, while the blood rushed to my cheeks, and I could not trust myself to say a word of entreaty that she would keep the ring where it was before.

I was completely fooled by this, and for two days shut myself up in my own room whenever Bertha was absent, that I might intoxicate myself afresh with the thought of this scene, and all it implied.

I should mention that during these two months—which seemed a long life to me from the novelty and intensity of the pleasures and pains I underwent—my diseased participation in other people's consciousness continued to torment me; now it was my father, and now my brother, now Mrs Filmore or her husband, and now our German courier, whose stream of thought rushed upon me like a ringing in the ears not to be got rid of, though it allowed my own impulses and ideas to continue their uninterrupted course. It was like a preternaturally heightened sense of hearing, making audible to one a roar of sound where others find perfect stillness. The weariness and disgust of this involuntary intrusion into other souls was counteracted only by my ignorance of Bertha, and my growing passion for her; a passion enormously stimulated, if not produced, by that ignorance. She was my oasis of mystery in the dreary desert of knowledge. I had never allowed my diseased condition to betray itself, or to drive me into any unusual speech or action, except once, when, in a moment of peculiar bitterness against my brother, I had forestalled some words which I knew he was going to utacornter—a clever observation, which he had prepared beforehand. He had occasionally a slightly-affected hesitation in his speech, and when he paused an instant after the second word, my impatience and jealousy impelled me to continue the speech for him, as if it were something we had both learnt by rote. He coloured and looked astonished, as well as annoyed; and the words had no sooner escaped my lips than I felt a shock of alarm lest such an anticipation of words, very far from being words of course easy to divine, should have betrayed me as an exceptional being, a sort of quiet energumen,[1] that every one, Bertha above all, would shudder at and avoid. But I magnified, as usual, the impression any word or deed of mine could produce on others; for no one gave any sign of having noticed my interruption as more than a rudeness, to be forgiven me on the score of my feeble nervous condition.

While this superadded consciousness of the actual was almost constant with me, I had never had a recurrence of that distinct prevision which I have described in relation to my first interview with

Bertha; and I was waiting with eager curiosity to know whether or not my vision of Prague would prove to have been an instance of the same kind. A few days after the incident of the opal ring, we were paying one of our frequent visits to the Lichtenberg Palace. I could never look at many pictures in succession; for pictures, when they are at all powerful, affect me so strongly that one or two exhaust all my capability of contemplation. This morning I had been looking at Giorgione's[2] picture of the cruel-eyed woman, said to be a likeness of Lucrezia Borgia.[3] I had stood long alone before it, fascinated by the terrible reality of that cunning, relentless face, till I felt a strange poisoned sensation, as if I had long been inhaling a fatal odour, and was just beginning to be conscious of its effects. Perhaps even then I should not have moved away, if the rest of the party had not returned to this room, and announced that they were going to the Belvedere Gallery to settle a bet which had arisen between my brother and Mr Filmore about a portrait. I followed them dreamily, and was hardly alive to what occurred till they had all gone up to the gallery, leaving me below; for I refused to come within sight of another picture that day. I made my way to the Grand Terrace, for it was agreed that we should saunter in the gardens when the dispute had been decided. I had been sitting here a short space, vaguely conscious of trim gardens, with a city and green hills in the distance, when, wishing to avoid the proximity of the sentinel, I rose and walked down the broad stone steps, intending to seat myself farther on in the gardens. Just as I reached the gravel walk, I felt an arm slipped within mine, and a light hand gently pressing my wrist. In the same instant a strange intoxicating numbness passed over me, like the continuance or climax of the sensation I was still feeling from the gaze of Lucrezia Borgia. The gardens, the summer sky, the consciousness of Bertha's arm being within mine, all vanished, and I seemed to be suddenly in darkness, out of which there gradually broke a dim firelight, and I felt myself sitting in my father's leather chair in the library at home. I knew the fireplace—the dogs[4] for the wood fire—the black marble chimney-piece with the white marble medallion of the dying Cleopatra in the centre. Intense and hopeless

misery was pressing on my soul; the light became stronger, for Bertha was entering with a candle in her hand—Bertha, my wife—with cruel eyes, with green jewels and green leaves on her white ball-dress; every hateful thought within her present to me. . . . . "Madman, idiot! why don't you kill yourself, then?" It was a moment of hell. I saw into her pitiless soul—saw its barren worldliness, its scorching hate—and felt it clothe me round like an air I was obliged to breathe. She came with her candle and stood over me with a bitter smile of contempt; I saw the great emerald brooch on her bosom, a studded serpent with diamond eyes. I shuddered—I despised this woman with the barren soul and mean thoughts; but I felt helpless before her, as if she clutched my bleeding heart, and would clutch it till the last drop of life-blood ebbed away. She was my wife, and we hated each other. Gradually the hearth, the dim library, the candle-light disappeared—seemed to melt away into a background of light, the green serpent with the diamond eyes remaining a dark image on the retina. Then I had a sense of my eyelids quivering, and the living daylight broke in upon me; I saw gardens, and heard voices; I was seated on the steps of the Belvedere Terrace, and my friends were round me.

The tumult of mind into which I was thrown by this hideous vision made me ill for several days, and prolonged our stay at Vienna. I shuddered with horror as the scene recurred to me; and it recurred constantly, with all its minutiæ, as if they had been burnt into my memory; and yet, such is the madness of the human heart under the influence of its immediate desires, I felt a wild hell-braving joy that Bertha was to be mine; for the fulfilment of my former prevision concerning her first appearance before me, left me little hope that this last hideous glimpse of the future was the mere diseased play of my own mind, and had no relation to external realities. One thing alone I looked towards as a possible means of casting doubt on my terrible conviction—the discovery that my vision of Prague had been false—and Prague was the next city on our route.

Meanwhile, I was no sooner in Bertha's society again, than I was as completely under her sway as before. What if I saw into the heart of Bertha, the matured woman—Bertha, my wife? Bertha, the girl, was a fascinating secret to me still: I trembled under her touch; I felt the witchery of her presence; I yearned to be assured of her love. The fear of poison is feeble against the sense of thirst. Nay, I was just as jealous of my brother as before—just as much irritated by his small patronising ways; for my pride, my diseased sensibility, were there as they had always been, and winced as inevitably under every offence as my eye winced from an intruding mote. The future, even when brought within the compass of feeling by a vision that made me shudder, had still no more than the force of an idea, compared with the force of present emotion—of my love for Bertha, of my dislike and jealousy towards my brother.

It is an old story, that men sell themselves to the tempter, and sign a bond with their blood, because it is only to take effect at a distant day; then rush on to snatch the cup their souls thirst after with no less savage an impulse, because there is a dark shadow beside them for evermore. There is no short cut, no patent tram-road, to wisdom: after all the centuries of invention, the soul's path lies through the thorny wilderness which must be still trodden in solitude, with bleeding feet, with sobs for help, as it was trodden by them of old time.

My mind speculated eagerly on the means by which I should become my brother's successful rival, for I was still too timid, in my ignorance of Bertha's actual feeling, to venture on any step that would urge from her an avowal of it. I thought I should gain confidence even for this, if my vision of Prague proved to have been veracious; and yet, the horror of that certitude! Behind the slim girl Bertha, whose words and looks I watched for, whose touch was bliss, there stood continually that Bertha with the fuller form, the harder eyes, the more rigid mouth,—with the barren selfish soul laid bare; no longer a fascinating secret, but a measured fact, urging itself perpetually on my unwilling sight. Are you unable to give me your sympathy—you who read this? Are you unable to imagine this

double consciousness at work within me, flowing on like two parallel streams that never mingle their waters and blend into a common hue? Yet you must have known something of the presentiments that spring from an insight at war with passion; and my visions were only like presentiments intensified to horror. You have known the powerlessness of ideas before the might of impulse; and my visions, when once they had passed into memory, were mere ideas—pale shadows that beckoned in vain, while my hand was grasped by the living and the loved.

In after days I thought with bitter regret that if I had foreseen something more or something different—if instead of that hideous vision which poisoned the passion it could not destroy, or if, even along with it, I could have had a foreshadowing of that moment when I looked on my brother's face for the last time, some softening influence would have been shed over my feeling towards him: pride and hatred would surely have been subdued into pity, and the record of those hidden sins would have been shortened. But this is one of the vain thoughts with which we men flatter ourselves, trying to believe that the egoism within us would have easily been melted, and that it was only the narrowness of our knowledge which hindered our generosity, our awe, our human piety, from flooding our hard cruel indifference to the sensations and feelings of our fellow, with the tenderness and self-renunciation which have only come when the egoism has had its day, when, after our mean striving for a triumph that is to be another's loss, the triumph comes suddenly, and we shudder at it because it is held out by the chill hand of death.

Our arrival in Prague happened at night, and I was glad of this, for it seemed like a deferring of a terribly decisive moment, to be in the city for hours without seeing it. As we were not to remain long in Prague, but to go on speedily to Dresden, it was proposed that we should drive out the next morning and take a general view of the place, as well as visit some of its specially interesting spots, before the heat became oppressive—for we were in August, and the season was hot and dry. But it happened that the ladies were rather late at

their morning toilette, and to my father's politely repressed but perceptible annoyance, we were not in the carriage till the morning was far advanced. I thought with a sense of relief, as we entered the Jews' quarter, where we were to visit the old synagogue, that we should be kept in this flat, shut-up part of the city, until we should all be too tired and too warm to go farther, and so we should return without seeing more than the streets through which we had already passed. That would give me another day's suspense—suspense, the only form in which a fearful spirit knows the solace of hope. But, as I stood under the blackened, groined arches of that old synagogue, made dimly visible by the seven thin candles in the sacred lamp, while our Jewish cicerone[5] reached down the Book of the Law, and read to us in its ancient tongue,—I felt a shuddering impression that this strange building, with its shrunken lights, this surviving withered remnant of medieval Judaism, was of a piece with my vision. Those darkened dusty Christian saints, with their loftier arches and their larger candles, needed the consolatory scorn with which they might point to a more shrivelled death in life than their own.

As I expected, when we left the Jews' quarter, the elders of our party wished to return to the hotel. But now, instead of rejoicing in this, as I had done beforehand, I felt a sudden overpowering impulse to go on at once to the bridge, and put an end to the suspense I had been wishing to protract. I declared, with unusual decision, that I would get out of the carriage and walk on alone; they might return without me. My father, thinking this merely a sample of my usual "poetic nonsense," objected that I should only do myself harm by walking in the heat; but when I persisted, he said angrily that I might follow my own absurd devices, but that Schmidt (our courier) must go with me. I assented to this, and set off with Schmidt towards the bridge. I had no sooner passed from under the archway of the grand old gate leading on to the bridge, than a trembling seized me, and I turned cold under the mid-day sun; yet I went on; I was in search of something—a small detail which I remembered with special intensity as part of my vision. There it was

—the patch of coloured light on the pavement transmitted through a lamp in the shape of a star.

Endnotes

- Note 1: A form of heart disease marked by intense pain due to insufficient blood flow.Return to reference 1
- Note 2:
  Inscription on Swift's tombstone [*Eliot's note*]. Trans: Where savage indignation can lacerate his heart no more (Latin). "Swift": Jonathan Swift (1667–1745), Anglo-Irish author of works including *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) and A Modest Proposal" (1729). He is buried inside St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, Ireland.
  Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A preparatory school for the British elite.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Greek and Latin were central to British elite education.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The narrator is referring to popular translations of Greek and Roman classics. The implication is that no basis for his assessments, never having read these texts in the original.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Elite private boarding school such as Eton.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Mr. Letherall is practicing phrenology, or the attempt to understand character from the shape of the skull.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: *Don Quixote* (1605), novel by Miguel de Cervantes (1547–1616); Plutarch (46–after 119), Greek biographer and philosopher; William Shakespeare (1564–1616), British playwright and poet.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), Romantic philosopher.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Boys.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Medicine.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: John Milton (1608–1674), British author and political theorist; Homer (ca. 8th century B.C.E.): author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; Dante Aligheri (1265–1321), author of *The Divine Comedy*.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The pseudonym for Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg (1772–1801), poet, philosopher, and mystic.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Giovanni Antonio Canal (1697–1768), Italian painter.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Water spirit from Grimms' fairy tales.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: "Sir is not well?" (French).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Witty remarks.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Good woman (French).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A person possessed by the devil.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Giorgione (ca. 1477–1510), Italian painter.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Noblewoman (1480–1519) who reigned as the governor of Spoleto; she is rumored to have engaged in multiple murders and illicit affairs.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Andirons.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Museum guide.Return to reference 5

CHAPTER II

Before the autumn was at an end, and while the brown leaves still stood thick on the beeches in our park, my brother and Bertha were engaged to each other, and it was understood that their marriage was to take place early in the next spring. In spite of the certainty I had felt from that moment, on the bridge at Prague, that Bertha would one day be my wife, my constitutional timidity and distrust had continued to benumb me, and the words in which I had sometimes premeditated a confession of my love, had died away unuttered. The same conflict had gone on within me as before—the longing for an assurance of love from Bertha's lips, the dread lest a word of contempt and denial should fall upon me like a corrosive acid. What was the conviction of a distant necessity to me? I trembled under a present glance, I hungered after a present joy, I was clogged and chilled by a present fear. And so the days passed on; I witnessed Bertha's engagement and heard her marriage discussed as if I were under a conscious nightmare—knowing it was a dream that would vanish, but feeling stifled under the grasp of hard-clutching fingers.

When I was not in Bertha's presence—and I was with her very often, for she continued to treat me with a playful patronage that wakened no jealousy in my brother—I spent my time chiefly in wandering, in strolling, or taking long rides while the daylight lasted, and then shutting myself up with my unread books; for books had lost the power of chaining my attention. My self-consciousness was heightened to that pitch of intensity in which our own emotions take the form of a drama that urges itself imperatively on our contemplation, and we begin to weep, less under the sense of our suffering than at the thought of it. I felt a sort of pitying anguish over the pathos of my own lot—the lot of a being finely organised for pain, but with hardly any fibres that responded to pleasure—to whom the idea of future evil robbed the present of its joy, and for whom the idea of future good did not still the uneasiness of a present yearning or a present dread: I went dumbly through that

stage of the poet's suffering, in which he feels the delicious pang of utterance, and makes an image of his sorrows.

I was left entirely without remonstrance concerning this dreamy wayward life: I knew my father's thought about me:—"That lad will never be good for anything in life: he may waste his years in an insignificant way on the income that falls to him: I shall not trouble myself about a career for him."

One mild morning in the beginning of November, it happened that I was standing outside the portico patting lazy old Cæsar, a Newfoundland almost blind with age, the only dog that ever took any notice of me—for the very dogs shunned me, and fawned on the happier people about me—when the groom brought up my brother's horse which was to carry him to the hunt, and my brother himself appeared at the door, florid, broad-chested, and self-complacent, feeling what a good-natured fellow he was not to behave insolently to us all on the strength of his great advantages.

"Latimer, old boy," he said to me in a tone of compassionate cordiality, "what a pity it is you don't have a run with the hounds now and then. The finest thing in the world for low spirits!"

"Low spirits!" I thought bitterly, as he rode away; "that's the sort of phrase with which coarse, narrow natures like yours think you completely define experience of which you can know no more than your horse knows. It is to such as you that the good of this world falls: ready dulness, healthy selfishness, good-tempered conceit—these are the keys to happiness."

The quick thought came, that my selfishness was even stronger than his—it was only a suffering selfishness instead of an enjoying one. But then, again, my exasperating insight into Alfred's self-complacent soul, his freedom from all the doubts and fears, the unsatisfied yearnings, the exquisite tortures of sensitiveness, that had made the web of my life, seemed to absolve me from all bonds towards him. This man needed no pity, no love; those fine influences would have been as little felt by him as the delicate white mist is felt by the rock it caresses. There was no evil in store for *him*: if he was

not to marry Bertha, it would be because he had found a lot pleasanter to himself.

Mr Filmore's house lay not more than half a mile beyond our own gates, and whenever I knew my brother was gone in another direction, I went there for the chance of finding Bertha at home. Later on in the day I walked thither. By a rare accident she was alone, and we walked out in the grounds together, for she seldom went on foot beyond the trimly-swept gravel-walks. I remember what a beautiful sylph she looked to me as the low November sun shone on her blond hair, and she tripped along teasing me with her usual light banter, to which I listened half fondly, half moodily: it was all the sign Bertha's mysterious inner self ever made to me. To-day perhaps the moodiness predominated, for I had not yet shaken off the access of jealous hate which my brother had raised in me by his parting patronage. Suddenly I interrupted and startled her by saying, almost fiercely, "Bertha, how can you love Alfred?"

She looked at me with surprise for a moment, but soon her light smile came again, and she answered sarcastically, "Why do you suppose I love him?"

"How can you ask that, Bertha?"

"What! your wisdom thinks I must love the man I'm going to marry? The most unpleasant thing in the world. I should quarrel with him; I should be jealous of him; our *ménage*[6] would be conducted in a very ill-bred manner. A little quiet contempt contributes greatly to the elegance of life."

"Bertha, that is not your real feeling. Why do you delight in trying to deceive me by inventing such cynical speeches?"

"I need never take the trouble of invention in order to deceive you, my small Tasso"[7]—(that was the mocking name she usually gave me). "The easiest way to deceive a poet is to tell him the truth."

She was testing the validity of her epigram in a daring way, and for a moment the shadow of my vision—the Bertha whose soul was no secret to me—passed between me and the radiant girl, the playful sylph whose feelings were a fascinating mystery. I suppose I

must have shuddered, or betrayed in some other way my momentary chill of horror.

"Tasso!" she said, seizing my wrist, and peeping round into my face, "are you really beginning to discern what a heartless girl I am? Why, you are not half the poet I thought you were; you are actually capable of believing the truth about me."

The shadow passed from between us, and was no longer the object nearest to me. The girl whose light fingers grasped me, whose elfish charming face looked into mine—who, I thought, was betraying an interest in my feelings that she would not have directly avowed,—this warm-breathing presence again possessed my senses and imagination like a returning syren melody that had been overpowered for an instant by the roar of threatening waves. It was a moment as delicious to me as the waking up to a consciousness of youth after a dream of middle age. I forgot everything but my passion, and said, with swimming eyes—

"Bertha, shall you love me when we are first married? I wouldn't mind if you really loved me only for a little while."

Her look of astonishment, as she loosed my hand and started away from me, recalled me to a sense of my strange, my criminal indiscretion.

"Forgive me," I said, hurriedly, as soon as I could speak again; "I didn't know what I was saying."

"Ah, Tasso's mad fit has come on, I see," she answered quietly, for she had recovered herself sooner than I had. "Let him go home and keep his head cool. I must go in, for the sun is setting."

I left her—full of indignation against myself. I had let slip words which, if she reflected on them, might rouse in her a suspicion of my abnormal mental condition—a suspicion which of all things I dreaded. And besides that, I was ashamed of the apparent baseness I had committed in uttering them to my brother's betrothed wife. I wandered home slowly, entering our park through a private gate instead of by the lodges. As I approached the house, I saw a man dashing off at full speed from the stable-yard across the park. Had any accident happened at home? No; perhaps it was only one of my

father's peremptory business errands that required this headlong haste. Nevertheless I quickened my pace without any distinct motive, and was soon at the house. I will not dwell on the scene I found there. My brother was dead—had been pitched from his horse, and killed on the spot by a concussion of the brain.

I went up to the room where he lay, and where my father was seated beside him with a look of rigid despair. I had shunned my father more than any one since our return home, for the radical antipathy between our natures made my insight into his inner self a constant affliction to me. But now, as I went up to him, and stood beside him in sad silence, I felt the presence of a new element that blended us as we had never been blent before. My father had been one of the most successful men in the money-getting world: he had had no sentimental sufferings, no illness. The heaviest trouble that had befallen him was the death of his first wife. But he married my mother soon after; and I remember he seemed exactly the same, to my keen childish observation, the week after her death as before. But now, at last, a sorrow had come—the sorrow of old age, which suffers the more from the crushing of its pride and its hopes, in proportion as the pride and hope are narrow and prosaic. His son was to have been married soon—would probably have stood for the borough at the next election. That son's existence was the best motive that could be alleged for making new purchases of land every year to round off the estate. It is a dreary thing to live on doing the same things year after year, without knowing why we do them. Perhaps the tragedy of disappointed youth and passion is less piteous than the tragedy of disappointed age and worldliness.

As I saw into the desolation of my father's heart, I felt a movement of deep pity towards him, which was the beginning of a new affection—an affection that grew and strengthened in spite of the strange bitterness with which he regarded me in the first month or two after my brother's death. If it had not been for the softening influence of my compassion for him—the first deep compassion I had ever felt—I should have been stung by the perception that my father transferred the inheritance of an eldest son to me with a

mortified sense that fate had compelled him to the unwelcome course of caring for me as an important being. It was only in spite of himself that he began to think of me with anxious regard. There is hardly any neglected child, for whom death has made vacant a more favoured place, that will not understand what I mean.

Gradually, however, my new deference to his wishes, the effect of that patience which was born of my pity for him, won upon his affection, and he began to please himself with the endeavour to make me fill my brother's place as fully as my feebler personality would admit. I saw that the prospect which by-and-by presented itself of my becoming Bertha's husband was welcome to him, and he even contemplated in my case what he had not intended in my brother's—that his son and daughter-in-law should make one household with him. My softened feeling towards my father made this the happiest time I had known since childhood;—these last months in which I retained the delicious illusion of loving Bertha, of longing and doubting and hoping that she loved me. She behaved with a certain new consciousness and distance towards me after my brother's death; and I too was under a double constraint—that of delicacy towards my brother's memory, and of anxiety as to the impression my abrupt words had left on her mind. But the additional screen this mutual reserve erected between us only brought me more completely under her power: no matter how empty the adytum,[8] so that the veil be thick enough. So absolute is our soul's need of something hidden and uncertain for the maintenance of that doubt and hope and effort which are the breath of its life, that if the whole future were laid bare to us beyond to-day, the interest of all mankind would be bent on the hours that lie between; we should pant after the uncertainties of our one morning and our one afternoon; we should rush fiercely to the Exchange for our last possibility of speculation, of success, of disappointment; we should have a glut of political prophets foretelling a crisis or a no-crisis within the only twenty-four hours left open to prophecy. Conceive the condition of the human mind if all propositions whatsoever were self-evident except one, which was to become self-evident at the

close of a summer's day, but in the mean time might be the subject of question, of hypothesis, of debate. Art and philosophy, literature and science, would fasten like bees on that one proposition that had the honey of probability in it, and be the more eager because their enjoyment would end with sunset. Our impulses, our spiritual activities, no more adjust themselves to the idea of their future nullity, than the beating of our heart, or the irritability of our muscles.

Bertha, the slim, fair-haired girl, whose present thoughts and emotions were an enigma to me amidst the fatiguing obviousness of the other minds around me, was as absorbing to me as a single unknown to-day—as a single hypothetic proposition to remain problematic till sunset; and all the cramped, hemmed-in belief and disbelief, trust and distrust, of my nature, welled out in this one narrow channel.

And she made me believe that she loved me. Without ever quitting her tone of badinage and playful superiority, she intoxicated me with the sense that I was necessary to her, that she was never at ease unless I was near her, submitting to her playful tyranny. It costs a woman so little effort to besot us in this way! A half-repressed word, a moment's unexpected silence, even an easy fit of petulance on our account, will serve us as *hashish* for a long while. Out of the subtlest web of scarcely-perceptible signs, she set me weaving the fancy that she had always unconsciously loved me better than Alfred, but that, with the ignorant fluttered sensibility of a young girl, she had been imposed on by the charm that lay for her in the distinction of being admired and chosen by a man who made so brilliant a figure in the world as my brother. She satirised herself in a very graceful way for her vanity and ambition. What was it to me that I had the light of my wretched prevision on the fact that now it was I who possessed at least all but the personal part of my brother's advantages? Our sweet illusions are half of them conscious illusions, like effects of colour that we know to be made up of tinsel, broken glass, and rags.

We were married eighteen months after Alfred's death, one cold, clear morning in April, when there came hail and sunshine both together; and Bertha, in her white silk and pale-green leaves, and the pale sunshine of her hair and eyes, looked like the spirit of the morning. My father was happier than he had thought of being again: my marriage, he felt sure, would complete the desirable modification of my character, and make me practical and worldly enough to take my place in society among sane men. For he delighted in Bertha's tact and acuteness, and felt sure she would be mistress of me, and make me what she chose: I was only twenty-one, and madly in love with her. Poor father! He kept that hope a little while after our first year of marriage, and it was not quite extinct when paralysis came and saved him from utter disappointment.

I shall hurry through the rest of my story, not dwelling so much as I have hitherto done on my inward experience. When people are well known to each other, they talk rather of what befals them externally, leaving their feelings and sentiments to be inferred.

We lived in a round of visits for some time after our return home, giving splendid dinner-parties, and making a sensation in our neighbourhood by the new lustre of our equipage, for my father had reserved this display of his increased wealth for the period of his son's marriage; and we gave our acquaintances liberal opportunity for remarking that it was a pity I made so poor a figure as an heir and a bridegroom. The nervous fatigue of this existence, the insincerities and platitudes which I had to live through twice over—through my inner and outward sense—would have been maddening to me, if I had not had that sort of intoxicated callousness which came from the delights of a first passion. A bride and bridegroom, surrounded by all the appliances of wealth, hurried through the day by the whirl of society, filling their solitary moments with hastily-snatched caresses, are prepared for their future life together, as the novice is prepared for the cloister, by experiencing its utmost contrast.

Through all these crowded excited months, Bertha's inward self remained shrouded from me, and I still read her thoughts only

through the language of her lips and demeanour: I had still the delicious human interest of wondering whether what I did and said pleased her, of longing to hear a word of affection, of giving a delicious exaggeration of meaning to her smile. But I was conscious of a growing difference in her manner towards me; sometimes strong enough to be called haughty coldness, cutting and chilling me as the hail had done that came across the sunshine on our marriage morning; sometimes only perceptible in the dexterous avoidance of a *tête-à-tête*[9] walk or dinner, to which I had been looking forward. I had been deeply pained by this—had even felt a sort of crushing of the heart, from the sense that my brief day of happiness was near its setting; but still I remained dependent on Bertha, eager for the last rays of a bliss that would soon be gone for ever, hoping and watching for some after-glow more beautiful from the impending night.

I remember—how should I not remember?—the time when that dependence and hope utterly left me—when the sadness I had felt in Bertha's growing estrangement became a joy that I looked back upon with longing, as a man might look back on the last pains in a paralysed limb. It was just after the close of my father's last illness, which necessarily withdrew us from society, and threw us more upon each other. It was the evening of my father's death. On that evening the veil that had shrouded Bertha's soul from me, and made me find in her alone among my fellow-beings the blessed possibility of mystery, and doubt, and expectation, was first withdrawn. Perhaps it was the first day since the beginning of my passion for her, in which that passion was completely neutralised by the presence of an absorbing feeling of another kind. I had been watching by my father's death-bed: I had been witnessing the last fitful yearning glances that his soul had cast back on the spent inheritance of life—the last faint consciousness of love that he had gathered from the pressure of my hand. What are all our personal loves when we have been sharing in that supreme agony? In the first moments when we come away from the presence of death, every other relation to the

living is merged, to our feeling, in the great relation of a common nature and a common destiny.

It was in that state of mind that I joined Bertha in her private sitting-room. She was seated in a leaning posture on a settee, with her back towards the door; the great rich coils of her blond hair surmounting her small neck, visible above the back of the settee. I remember, as I closed the door behind me, a cold tremulousness seizing me, and a vague sense of being hated and lonely—vague and strong, like a presentiment. I know how I looked at that moment, for I saw myself in Bertha's thought as she lifted her cutting grey eyes, and looked at me: a miserable ghost-seer, surrounded by phantoms in the noon-day, trembling under a breeze when the leaves were still, without appetite for the common objects of human desire, but pining after the moonbeams. We were front to front with each other, and judged each other. The terrible moment of complete illumination had come to me, and I saw that the darkness had hidden no landscape from me, but only a blank prosaic wall: from that evening forth, through the sickening years that followed, I saw all round the narrow room of this woman's soul—saw petty artifice and mere negation where I had delighted to believe in coy sensibilities, and in wit at war with latent feeling—saw the light floating vanities of the girl defining themselves into the systematic coquetry, the scheming selfishness, of the woman—saw repulsion and antipathy hardening into cruel hatred, giving pain only for the sake of wreaking itself.

For Bertha too, after her kind, felt the bitterness of disillusion. She had believed that my wild poet's passion for her would make me her slave; and that, being her slave, I should execute her will in all things. With the essential shallowness of a negative, unimaginative nature, she was unable to conceive the fact that sensibilities were anything else than weaknesses. She had thought my weaknesses would put me in her power, and she found them unmanageable forces. Our positions were reversed. Before marriage, she had completely mastered my imagination, for she was a secret to me; and I created the unknown thought before which I trembled, as if it were hers. But now that her soul was laid open to me, now that I

was compelled to share the privacy of her motives, to follow all the petty devices that preceded her words and acts, she found herself powerless with me, except to produce in me the chill shudder of repulsion—powerless, because I could be acted on by no lever within her reach. I was dead to worldly ambitions, to social vanities, to all the incentives within the compass of her narrow imagination, and I lived under influences utterly invisible to her.

She was really pitiable to have such a husband, and so all the world thought. A graceful, brilliant woman, like Bertha, who smiled on morning callers, made a figure in ball-rooms, and was capable of that light repartee which, from such a woman, is accepted as wit, was secure of carrying off all sympathy from a husband who was sickly, abstracted, and, as some suspected, crack-brained. Even the servants in our house gave her the balance of their regard and pity. For there were no audible quarrels between us; our alienation, our repulsion from each other, lay within the silence of our own hearts; and if the mistress went out a great deal, and seemed to dislike the master's society, was it not natural, poor thing? The master was odd. I was kind and just to my dependants, but I excited in them a shrinking, half-contemptuous pity; for this class of men and women are but slightly determined in their estimate of others by general considerations of character. They judge of persons as they judge of coins, and value those who pass current at a high rate.

After a time I interfered so little with Bertha's habits, that it might seem wonderful how her hatred towards me could grow so intense and active as it did. But she had begun to suspect, by some involuntary betrayals of mine, that there was an abnormal power of penetration in me—that fitfully, at least, I was strangely cognisant of her thoughts and intentions, and she began to be haunted by a terror of me, which alternated every now and then with defiance. She meditated continually how the incubus[1] could be shaken off her life—how she could be freed from this hateful bond to a being whom she at once despised as an imbecile, and dreaded as an inquisitor. For a long while she lived in the hope that my evident wretchedness would drive me to the commission of suicide; but suicide was not in

my nature. I was too completely swayed by the sense that I was in the grasp of unknown forces, to believe in my power of self-release. Towards my own destiny I had become entirely passive; for my one ardent desire had spent itself, and impulse no longer predominated over knowledge. For this reason I never thought of taking any steps towards a complete separation, which would have made our alienation evident to the world. Why should I rush for help to a new course, when I was only suffering from the consequences of a deed which had been the act of my intensest will? That would have been the logic of one who had desires to gratify, and I had no desires. But Bertha and I lived more and more aloof from each other. The rich find it easy to live married and apart.

That course of our life which I have indicated in a few sentences filled the space of years. So much misery—so slow and hideous a growth of hatred and sin, may be compressed into a sentence! And men judge of each other's lives through this summary medium. They epitomise the experience of their fellow-mortal, and pronounce judgment on him in neat syntax, and feel themselves wise and virtuous—conquerors over the temptations they define in well-selected predicates. Seven years of wretchedness glide glibly over the lips of the man who has never counted them out in moments of chill disappointment, of head and heart throbbings, of dread and vain wrestling, of remorse and despair. We learn *words* by rote, but not their meaning; *that* must be paid for with our life-blood, and printed in the subtle fibres of our nerves.

But I will hasten to finish my story. Brevity is justified at once to those who readily understand, and to those who will never understand.

Some years after my father's death, I was sitting by the dim firelight in my library one January evening—sitting in the leather chair that used to be my father's—when Bertha appeared at the door, with a candle in her hand, and advanced towards me. I knew the ball-dress she had on—the white ball-dress, with the green jewels, shone upon by the light of the wax candle which lit up the medallion of the dying Cleopatra on the mantelpiece. Why did she

come to me before going out? I had not seen her in the library, which was my habitual place, for months. Why did she stand before me with the candle in her hand, with her cruel contemptuous eyes fixed on me, and the glittering serpent, like a familiar demon, on her breast? For a moment I thought this fulfilment of my vision at Vienna marked some dreadful crisis in my fate, but I saw nothing in Bertha's mind, as she stood before me, except scorn for the look of overwhelming misery with which I sat before her. . . . "Fool, idiot, why don't you kill yourself, then?"—that was her thought. But at length her thoughts reverted to her errand, and she spoke aloud. The apparently indifferent nature of the errand seemed to make a ridiculous anticlimax to my prevision and my agitation.

"I have had to hire a new maid. Fletcher is going to be married, and she wants me to ask you to let her husband have the public-house and farm at Molton. I wish him to have it. You must give the promise now, because Fletcher is going to-morrow morning—and quickly, because I'm in a hurry."

"Very well; you may promise her," I said, indifferently, and Bertha swept out of the library again.

I always shrank from the sight of a new person, and all the more when it was a person whose mental life was likely to weary my reluctant insight with worldly ignorant trivialities. But I shrank especially from the sight of this new maid, because her advent had been announced to me at a moment to which I could not cease to attach some fatality: I had a vague dread that I should find her mixed up with the dreary drama of my life—that some new sickening vision would reveal her to me as an evil genius. When at last I did unavoidably meet her, the vague dread was changed into definite disgust. She was a tall, wiry, dark-eyed woman, this Mrs Archer, with a face handsome enough to give her coarse hard nature the odious finish of bold, self-confident coquetry. That was enough to make me avoid her, quite apart from the contemptuous feeling with which she contemplated me. I seldom saw her; but I perceived that she rapidly became a favourite with her mistress, and, after the lapse of eight or nine months, I began to be aware that there had arisen in Bertha's

mind towards this woman a mingled feeling of fear and dependence, and that this feeling was associated with ill-defined images of candle-light scenes in her dressing-room, and the looking-up of something in Bertha's cabinet. My interviews with my wife had become so brief and so rarely solitary, that I had no opportunity of perceiving these images in her mind with more definiteness. The recollections of the past become contracted in the rapidity of thought till they sometimes bear hardly a more distinct resemblance to the external reality than the forms of an oriental alphabet to the objects that suggested them.

Besides, for the last year or more a modification had been going forward in my mental condition, and was growing more and more marked. My insight into the minds of those around me was becoming dimmer and more fitful, and the ideas that crowded my double consciousness became less and less dependent on any personal contact. All that was personal in me seemed to be suffering a gradual death, so that I was losing the organ through which the personal agitations and projects of others could affect me. But along with this relief from wearisome insight, there was a new development of what I concluded—as I have since found rightly—to be a prevision of external scenes. It was as if the relation between me and my fellow-men was more and more deadened, and my relation to what we call the inanimate was quickened into new life. The more I lived apart from society, and in proportion as my wretchedness subsided from the violent throb of agonised passion into the dulness of habitual pain, the more frequent and vivid became such visions as that I had had of Prague—of strange cities, of sandy plains, of gigantic ruins, of midnight skies with strange bright constellations, of mountain-passes, of grassy nooks flecked with the afternoon sunshine through the boughs: I was in the midst of all these scenes, and in all of them one presence seemed to weigh on me in all these mighty shapes—the presence of something unknown and pitiless. For continual suffering had annihilated religious faith within me: to the utterly miserable—the unloving and the unloved—there is no religion possible, no worship, but a worship

of devils. And beyond all these, and continually recurring, was the vision of my death—the pangs, the suffocation, the last struggle, when life would be grasped at in vain.

Things were in this state near the end of the seventh year. I had become entirely free from insight, from my abnormal cognisance of any other consciousness than my own, and instead of intruding involuntarily into the world of other minds, was living continually in my own solitary future. Bertha was aware that I was greatly changed. To my surprise she had of late seemed to seek opportunities of remaining in my society, and had cultivated that kind of distant yet familiar talk which is customary between a husband and wife who live in polite and irrevocable alienation. I bore this with languid submission, and without feeling enough interest in her motives to be roused into keen observation; yet I could not help perceiving something triumphant and excited in her carriage and the expression of her face—something too subtle to express itself in words or tones, but giving one the idea that she lived in a state of expectation or hopeful suspense. My chief feeling was satisfaction that her inner self was once more shut out from me; and I almost revelled for the moment in the absent melancholy that made me answer her at cross purposes, and betray utter ignorance of what she had been saying. I remember well the look and the smile with which she one day said, after a mistake of this kind on my part: "I used to think you were a clairvoyant, and that was the reason why you were so bitter against other clairvoyants, wanting to keep your monopoly; but I see now you have become rather duller than the rest of the world."

I said nothing in reply. It occurred to me that her recent obtrusion of herself upon me might have been prompted by the wish to test my power of detecting some of her secrets; but I let the thought drop again at once: her motives and her deeds had no interest for me, and whatever pleasures she might be seeking, I had no wish to baulk her. There was still pity in my soul for every living thing, and Bertha was living—was surrounded with possibilities of misery.

Just at this time there occurred an event which roused me somewhat from my inertia, and gave me an interest in the passing moment that I had thought impossible for me. It was a visit from Charles Meunier, who had written me word that he was coming to England for relaxation from too strenuous labour, and would like to see me. Meunier had now a European reputation; but his letter to me expressed that keen remembrance of an early regard, an early debt of sympathy, which is inseparable from nobility of character: and I too felt as if his presence would be to me like a transient resurrection into a happier pre-existence.

He came, and as far as possible, I renewed our old pleasure of making *tête-à-tête* excursions, though, instead of mountains and glaciers and the wide blue lake, we had to content ourselves with mere slopes and ponds and artificial plantations. The years had changed us both, but with what different result! Meunier was now a brilliant figure in society, to whom elegant women pretended to listen, and whose acquaintance was boasted of by noblemen ambitious of brains. He repressed with the utmost delicacy all betrayal of the shock which I am sure he must have received from our meeting, or of a desire to penetrate into my condition and circumstances, and sought by the utmost exertion of his charming social powers to make our reunion agreeable. Bertha was much struck by the unexpected fascinations of a visitor whom she had expected to find presentable only on the score of his celebrity, and put forth all her coquetries and accomplishments. Apparently she succeeded in attracting his admiration, for his manner towards her was attentive and flattering. The effect of his presence on me was so benignant, especially in those renewals of our old *tête-à-tête* wanderings, when he poured forth to me wonderful narratives of his professional experience, that more than once, when his talk turned on the psychological relations of disease, the thought crossed my mind that, if his stay with me were long enough, I might possibly bring myself to tell this man the secrets of my lot. Might there not lie some remedy for *me*, too, in his science? Might there not at least lie some comprehension and sympathy ready for me in his large and

susceptible mind? But the thought only flickered feebly now and then, and died out before it could become a wish. The horror I had of again breaking in on the privacy of another soul, made me, by an irrational instinct, draw the shroud of concealment more closely around my own, as we automatically perform the gesture we feel to be wanting in another.

When Meunier's visit was approaching its conclusion, there happened an event which caused some excitement in our household, owing to the surprisingly strong effect it appeared to produce on Bertha—on Bertha, the self-possessed, who usually seemed inaccessible to feminine agitations, and did even her hate in a self-restrained hygienic manner. This event was the sudden severe illness of her maid, Mrs Archer. I have reserved to this moment the mention of a circumstance which had forced itself on my notice shortly before Meunier's arrival, namely that there had been some quarrel between Bertha and this maid, apparently during a visit to a distant family, in which she had accompanied her mistress. I had overheard Archer speaking in a tone of bitter insolence, which I should have thought an adequate reason for immediate dismissal. No dismissal followed; on the contrary, Bertha seemed to be silently putting up with personal inconveniences from the exhibitions of this woman's temper. I was the more astonished to observe that her illness seemed a cause of strong solicitude to Bertha; that she was at the bedside night and day, and would allow no one else to officiate as head-nurse. It happened that our family doctor was out on a holiday, an accident which made Meunier's presence in the house doubly welcome, and he apparently entered into the case with an interest which seemed so much stronger than the ordinary professional feeling, that one day when he had fallen into a long fit of silence after visiting her, I said to him,

"Is this a very peculiar case of disease, Meunier?"

"No," he answered, "it is an attack of peritonitis,[2] which will be fatal, but which does not differ physically from many other cases that have come under my observation. But I'll tell you what I have on my mind. I want to make an experiment on this woman, if you

will give me permission. It can do her no harm—will give her no pain—for I shall not make it until life is extinct to all purposes of sensation. I want to try the effect of transfusing blood[3] into her arteries after the heart has ceased to beat for some minutes. I have tried the experiment again and again with animals that have died of this disease, with astounding results, and I want to try it on a human subject. I have the small tubes necessary, in a case I have with me, and the rest of the apparatus could be prepared readily. I should use my own blood—take it from my own arm. This woman won't live through the night, I'm convinced, and I want you to promise me your assistance in making the experiment. I can't do without another hand, but it would perhaps not be well to call in a medical assistant from among your provincial doctors. A disagreeable, foolish version of the thing might get abroad."

"Have you spoken to my wife on the subject?" I said, "because she appears to be peculiarly sensitive about this woman: she has been a favourite maid."

"To tell you the truth," said Meunier, "I don't want her to know about it. There are always insuperable difficulties with women in these matters, and the effect on the supposed dead body may be startling. You and I will sit up together, and be in readiness. When certain symptoms appear I shall take you in, and at the right moment we must manage to get every one else out of the room."

I need not give our farther conversation on the subject. He entered very fully into the details, and overcame my repulsion from them, by exciting in me a mingled awe and curiosity concerning the possible results of his experiment.

We prepared everything, and he instructed me in my part as assistant. He had not told Bertha of his absolute conviction that Archer would not survive through the night, and endeavoured to persuade her to leave the patient and take a night's rest. But she was obstinate, suspecting the fact that death was at hand, and supposing that he wished merely to save her nerves. She refused to leave the sick-room. Meunier and I sat up together in the library, he making frequent visits to the sickroom, and returning with the

information that the case was taking precisely the course he expected. Once he said to me, "Can you imagine any cause of ill feeling this woman has against her mistress, who is so devoted to her?"

"I think there was some misunderstanding between them before her illness. Why do you ask?"

"Because I have observed for the last five or six hours—since, I fancy, she has lost all hope of recovery—there seems a strange prompting in her to say something which pain and failing strength forbid her to utter; and there is a look of hideous meaning in her eyes, which she turns continually towards her mistress. In this disease the mind often remains singularly clear to the last."

"I am not surprised at an indication of malevolent feeling in her." I said. "She is a woman who has always inspired me with distrust and dislike, but she managed to insinuate herself into her mistress's favour." He remained silent after this, looking at the fire with an air of absorption, till he went up-stairs again. He remained away longer than usual, and on returning, said to me quietly, "Come now."

I followed him to the chamber where death was hovering. The dark hangings of the large bed made a background that gave a strong relief to Bertha's pale face as I entered. She started forward as she saw me enter, and then looked at Meunier with an expression of angry inquiry; but he lifted up his hand as if to impose silence, while he fixed his glance on the dying woman and felt her pulse. The face was pinched and ghastly, a cold perspiration was on the forehead, and the eyelids were lowered so as almost to conceal the large dark eyes. After a minute or two, Meunier walked round to the other side of the bed where Bertha stood, and with his usual air of gentle politeness towards her begged her to leave the patient under our care—everything should be done for her—she was no longer in a state to be conscious of an affectionate presence. Bertha was hesitating, apparently almost willing to believe his assurance and to comply. She looked round at the ghastly dying face, as if to read the confirmation of that assurance, when for a moment the lowered eyelids were raised again, and it seemed as if the eyes were looking

towards Bertha, but blankly. A shudder passed through Bertha's frame, and she returned to her station near the pillow, tacitly implying that she would not leave the room.

The eyelids were lifted no more. Once I looked at Bertha, as she watched the face of the dying one. She wore a rich peignoir,[4] and her blond hair was half covered by a lace cap: in her attire she was, as always, an elegant woman, fit to figure in a picture of modern aristocratic life: but I asked myself how that face of hers could ever have seemed to me the face of a woman born of woman, with memories of childhood, capable of pain, needing to be fondled? The features at that moment looked so preternaturally sharp, the eyes were so hard and eager—she looked like a cruel immortal, finding her spiritual feast in the agonies of a dying race. For across those hard features there came something like a flash when the last hour had been breathed out, and we all felt that the dark veil had completely fallen. What secret was there between Bertha and this woman? I turned my eyes from her with a horrible dread lest my insight should return, and I should be obliged to see what had been breeding about two unloving women's hearts. I felt that Bertha had been watching for the moment of death as the sealing of her secret: I thanked Heaven it could remain sealed for me.

Meunier said quietly, "Gone." He then gave his arm to Bertha, and she submitted to be led out of the room.

I suppose it was at her order that two female attendants came into the room, and dismissed the younger one who had been present before. When they entered, Meunier had already opened the artery in the long thin neck that lay rigid on the pillow, and I dismissed them, ordering them to remain at a distance till we rang: the doctor, I said, had an operation to perform—he was not sure about the death. For the next twenty minutes I forgot everything but Meunier and the experiment in which he was so absorbed, that I think his senses would have been closed against all sounds or sights that had no relation to it. It was my task at first to keep up the artificial respiration in the body after the transfusion had been effected, but presently Meunier relieved me, and I could see the

wondrous slow return of life: the breast began to heave, the inspirations became stronger, the eyelids quivered, and the soul seemed to have returned beneath them. The artificial respiration was withdrawn: still the breathing continued, and there was a movement of the lips.

Just then I heard the handle of the door moving: I suppose Bertha had heard from the women that they had been dismissed: probably a vague fear had arisen in her mind, for she entered with a look of alarm. She came to the foot of the bed and gave a stifled cry.

The dead woman's eyes were wide open, and met hers in full recognition—the recognition of hate. With a sudden strong effort, the hand that Bertha had thought for ever still was pointed towards her, and the haggard face moved. The gasping eager voice said,

"You mean to poison your husband. . . . the poison is in the black cabinet. . . . I got it for you. . . . you laughed at me, and told lies about me behind my back, to make me disgusting. . . . because you were jealous. . . . are you sorry . . . now?"

The lips continued to murmur, but the sounds were no longer distinct. Soon there was no sound—only a slight movement: the flame had leaped out, and was being extinguished the faster. The wretched woman's heart-strings had been set to hatred and vengeance; the spirit of life had swept the chords for an instant, and was gone again for ever. Good God! This is what it is to live again . . . to wake up with our unstilled thirst upon us, with our unuttered curses rising to our lips, with our muscles ready to act out their half-committed sins.

Bertha stood pale at the foot of the bed, quivering and helpless, despairing of devices, like a cunning animal whose hiding-places are surrounded by swift-advancing flame. Even Meunier looked paralysed; life for that moment ceased to be a scientific problem to him. As for me, this scene seemed of one texture with the rest of my existence: horror was my familiar, and this new revelation was only like an old pain recurring with new circumstances.

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Since then Bertha and I have lived apart—she in her own neighbourhood, the mistress of half our wealth, I as a wanderer in foreign countries, until I came to this Devonshire nest to die. Bertha lives pitied and admired—for what had I against that charming woman, whom every one but myself could have been happy with? There had been no witness of the scene in the dying room except Meunier, and while Meunier lived, his lips were sealed by a promise to me.

Once or twice, weary of wandering, I rested in a favourite spot, and my heart went out towards the men and women and children whose faces were becoming familiar to me: but I was driven away again in terror at the approach of my old insight—driven away to live continually with the one Unknown Presence revealed and yet hidden by the moving curtain of the earth and sky. Till at last disease took hold of me and forced me to rest here—forced me to live in dependence on my servants. And then the curse of insight—of my double consciousness, came again, and has never left me. I know all their narrow thoughts, their feeble regard, their half-wearied pity.

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It is the 20th of September 1850. I know these figures I have just written, as if they were a long familiar inscription. I have seen them on this page in my desk unnumbered times, when the scene of my dying struggle has opened upon me. . . .

1859

Endnotes

- Note 6: Household.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Torquato Tasso (1544–1595), Italian poet.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Inner sanctum, refuge.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Private conversation.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: Demon in male form.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Inflammation of the membrane lining the intestine; usually fatal.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Although transfusing blood was occasionally used as a remedy for hemophilia, it remained a highly experimental procedure until blood types were discovered and understood in the early 20th century.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Dressing gown.Return to reference 4

Victorian Debates about Women, Gender, and Sexuality

"The principal difference between ourselves and our ancestors is, that they took society as they found it, and never troubled themselves on the subject; while we are self-conscious and perplexed. . . . The institution of marriage might almost seem just now to be . . . just now upon its trial." This assertion by Justin M'Carthy, appearing in an essay on novels in the *Westminster Review* (July 1864), could be further extended, for on trial throughout the Victorian period was not only the institution of marriage but also the family itself and, most particularly, the traditional roles of women as wives, mothers, and daughters.

As indicated in the introduction to the Victorian Age, the "Woman Question," as it was often called, encompassed not one question but many. The mixed opinions of Queen Victoria illustrate some of its different aspects. Believing in education for her sex, she supported the founding of a college for women in 1847. At the same time, she described efforts to expand the franchise to women as "mad folly." Happily married herself until the death of Prince Albert in 1861, Victoria was nevertheless aware of some of the sacrifices marriage imposed on women. Writing in 1858 to her recently married daughter, she remarked: "There is great happiness . . . in devoting oneself to another who is worthy of one's affection; still, men are very selfish and the woman's devotion is always one of submission which makes our poor sex so very unenviable. This you will feel hereafter—I know; though it cannot be otherwise as God has willed it so."

Many of the queen's female subjects shared her assumption that women's role in the home was to be accepted as divinely willed.

Others justified the "submission" of which the Queen wrote on the grounds of women's supposed intellectual inferiority. In this context it would follow that a woman who tried to cultivate her intellect was violating the orders of both Nature and God. Woman was to be valued, instead, for other qualities considered especially characteristic of her sex: tenderness, innocence, domestic affection, and, in various degrees, submissiveness. This vision of womanhood played an important role in relation to middle-class men, as the writings of Sarah Stickney Ellis begin to suggest: while men's striving for worldly aggrandizement "is constantly misleading their steps, closing their ears against the voice of conscience, and beguiling them with the promise of peace, where peace was never found," she writes, with his wife's help, he might be able to preserve his best, least selfish, most spiritual self at home. Naturally more virtuous, and sequestered from political issues and economic competition, wives were imagined to serve as a kind of spiritual reservoir for husbands exposed to the rigors and dangers of the marketplace.

Such values could be onerous for middle- and upper-class women, many of whom complained of the boredom and frustration of being prohibited from exercising their brains and bodies. But they could also be dangerous, insofar as they helped justify the legal erasure of married women under the doctrine of "coverture." Coverture regarded women as "covered" or represented by their husbands, and hence unable to own property, sue or be sued, or file for divorce. Marital rape was not recognized in British law until 1992, and children legally belonged to their fathers. This situation changed gradually over the course of the century, with the 1857 and 1864 Marital Causes Acts, and the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882. Nevertheless, for most women, for most of the century, the law made it nearly impossible to escape abusive or exploitative marriages, even when their own lives or those of their children were imperiled. Meanwhile, unmarried middle-class women had almost no professional opportunities beyond working as governesses or companions that would not lead to the forfeiture of respectability.

While the cult of womanhood could be a burden for middle- and upper-class women, it was an inaccessible ideal for poor women. In the mid-nineteenth century, one-quarter of England's female population had jobs outside the home, most of which were physically gruelling and low paying. Thus, millions of women were employed as domestics, seamstresses, factory workers, farm laborers, or prostitutes. The realities of working women's lives were rarely acknowledged by those responsible for perpetuating certain myths of womanhood—though they figure prominently in the literature of reform of this period.

The first section of this cluster attends to the prevailing myth of womanhood as domestic goddess. Sarah Stickney Ellis, Coventry Patmore, and John Ruskin all make powerful claims about women's role in securing the virtues of their husbands—and hence, too, the virtue of the nation. The second and third attend to some of the most problematic consequences of this myth in the marriage laws that absorbed married women's legal identities into their husbands', and in the judgments made of women unable or unwilling to embody it. Blackstone's *Commentaries* offers the standard definition of "coverture," while Lady Caroline Norton became famous (or infamous) for her exposure of the abuse to which this law exposed even the richest and supposedly most powerful women in the country. The third section demonstrates how norms of femininity could be used to condemn social ills, whether those ills involved the conditions in factories where women were typically paid lower wages and so preferred to men (Engels), or the rampant prostitution that belied the normative marital heterosexuality that was advocated by both domestic ideologists and medical practitioners.

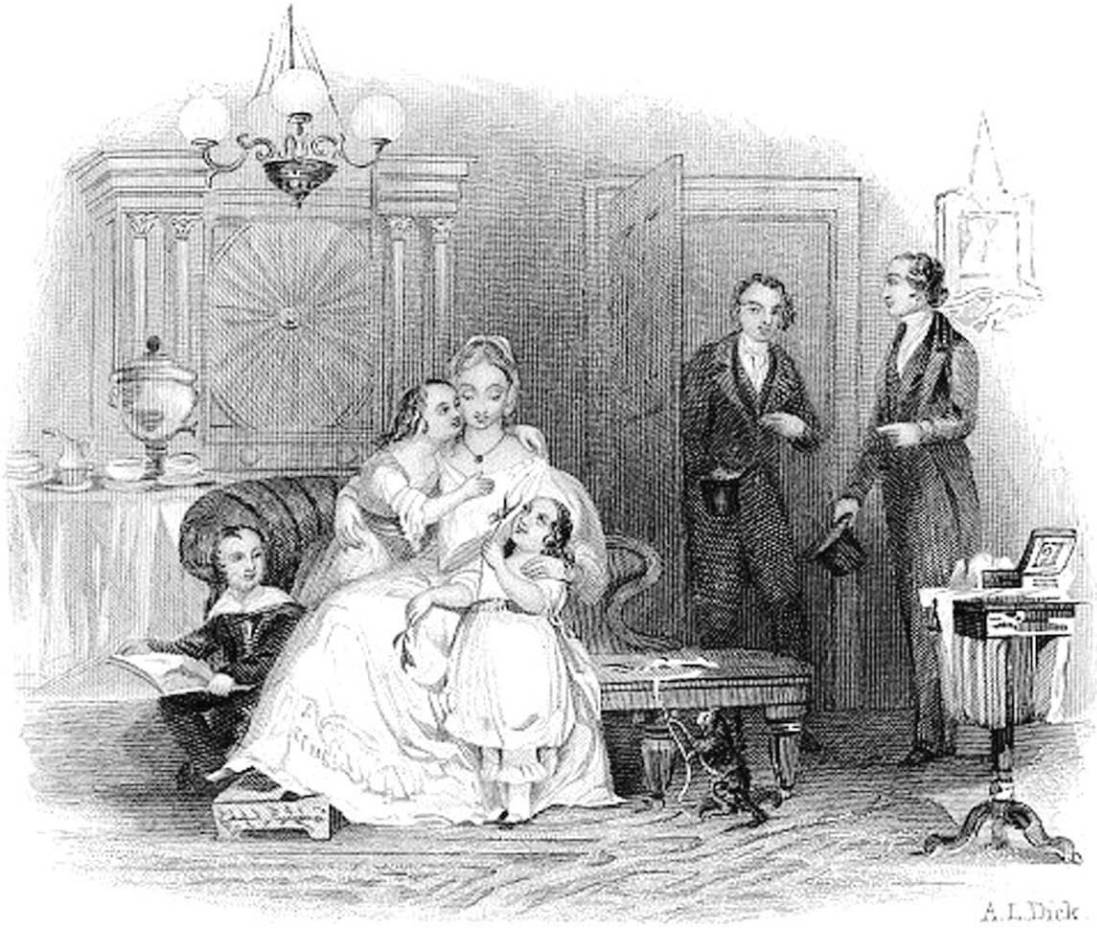
The fourth section focuses on the pathologization of sexuality—whether heterosexual (as in the case of William Acton, who regards sex between husbands and wives as nearly as dangerous as homosexuality or masturbation), homosexual, or onanistic. The final section focuses on the role gender norms played in the expansion of empire. British women were commonly regarded as powerful civilizing agents or means of disseminating British values. They were

also used as exemplars of the superiority of British culture: by comparison with the "hareem" that Harriet Martineau describes, or the barely human Fugueans that Charles Darwin depicts, the modest, cultivated, independent British woman was consistently offered to explain the responsibility of the British Empire to its less civilized neighbors. As critic Gayatri Spivak writes, one powerful apology for empire was the notion that it involved "white men saving brown women from brown men." White women played an important role in this notion, insofar as their supposed independence, virtue, and industry was offered as evidence of the superiority of British culture.

Middle-Class Women

SARAH STICKNEY ELLIS

In 1837 the essayist Sarah Stickney (1812?–1872) married William Ellis, a missionary, and began to work with him for the temperance movement and other evangelical causes. Ellis's 1839 book on women's education and domestic roles became a best seller, going through sixteen editions in two years. In the 1840s she founded a girls' school that put into practice her belief that feminine education should cultivate what she called "the heart" rather than the intellectual faculties of her pupils.



Home Comforts. The original caption to this frontispiece to *The Women of England* runs as follows: "It is the home comforts and fireside virtues."

From The Women of England: Their Social Duties and Domestic Habits

[DISINTERESTED KINDNESS]

To men belongs the potent—(I had almost said the *omnipotent*) consideration of worldly aggrandizement; and it is constantly misleading their steps, closing their ears against the voice of conscience, and beguiling them with the promise of peace, where peace was never found.

***

How often has man returned to his home with a mind confused by the many voices, which in the mart, the exchange, or the public assembly, have addressed themselves to his inborn selfishness, or his worldly pride; and while his integrity was shaken, and his resolution gave way beneath the pressure of apparent necessity, or the insidious pretenses of expediency, he has stood corrected before the clear eye of woman, as it looked directly to the naked truth, and detected the lurking evil of the specious act he was about to commit. Nay, so potent may have become this secret influence, that he may have borne it about with him like a kind of second conscience, for mental reference, and spiritual counsel, in moments of trial; and when the snares of the world were around him, and temptations from within and without have bribed over the witness in his own bosom, he has thought of the humble monitress[1] who sat alone, guarding the fireside comforts of his distant home; and the remembrance of her character, clothed in moral beauty, has scattered the clouds before his mental vision, and sent him back to that beloved home, a wiser and a better man.

The women of England, possessing the grand privilege of being better instructed than those of any other country, in the minutiae of domestic comfort, have obtained a degree of importance in society far beyond what their unobtrusive virtues would appear to claim. The long-established customs of their country have placed in their hands the high and holy duty of cherishing and protecting the minor morals of life, from whence springs all that is elevated in purpose, and glorious in action. The sphere of their direct personal influence is central, and consequently small; but its extreme operations are as widely extended as the range of human feeling. They may be less striking in society than some of the women of other countries, and may feel themselves, on brilliant and stirring occasions, as simple, rude, and unsophisticated in the popular science of excitement; but as far as the noble daring of Britain has sent forth her adventurous sons, and that is to every point of danger on the habitable globe, they have borne along with them a generosity, a disinterestedness,[2] and a moral courage, derived in no small measure from the female influence of their native country.

It is a fact well worthy of our serious attention, and one which bears immediately upon the subject under consideration, that the present state of our national affairs is such as to indicate that the influence of woman in counteracting the growing evils of society is about to be more needed than ever.

***

In order to ascertain what kind of education is most effective in making woman what she ought to be, the best method is to inquire into the character, station, and peculiar duties of woman throughout the largest portion of her earthly career; and then ask, for what she is most valued, admired, and beloved?

In answer to this, I have little hesitation in saying—for her disinterested kindness. Look at all the heroines, whether of romance or reality—at all the female characters that are held up to universal admiration—at all who have gone down to honored graves, amongst

the tears and lamentations of their survivors. Have these been the learned, the accomplished women; the women who could solve problems, and elucidate systems of philosophy? No: or if they have, they have also been women who were dignified with the majesty of moral greatness.

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I still cling fondly to the hope that some system of female instruction will be discovered, by which the young women of England may be sent from school to the homes of their parents, habituated to be on the watch for every opportunity of doing good to others; making it the first and the last inquiry of every day, "What can I do to make my parents, my brothers, or my sisters, more happy? I am but a feeble instrument in the hands of Providence, but as He will give me strength, I hope to pursue the plan to which I have been accustomed, of seeking my own happiness only in the happiness of others."

1839

Endnotes

- Note 1: Female adviser or mentor.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, independence, impartiality.Return to reference 2

COVENTRY PATMORE

Originally published between 1854 and 1862, *The Angel in the House*, a long poem about courtship and marriage by Coventry Patmore (1823–1896), became a best seller in the United States and later in Britain. Dedicated to the author's first wife, Emily Augusta Andrews, the poem celebrates their fifteen years of married life. (She died in 1862, and Patmore, who lived another three decades, remarried twice.) The poem, popular among Patmore's contemporaries (including Gerard Manley Hopkins and John Ruskin), fell out of favor in later years. Feminist critics such as Virginia Woolf criticized *The Angel in the House* both for the sentimentality of its ideal of woman and for the oppressive effect of this ideal on women's lives. Since Woolf, the phrase "the angel in the house" has often been used to encapsulate a patronizing Victorian attitude toward women, for which the poem is cited as prime evidence.

From The Angel in the House

The Paragon

When I behold the skies aloft
  Passing the pageantry of dreams,
The cloud whose bosom, cygnet-soft,
  A couch for nuptial Juno[1] seems,
The ocean broad, the mountains bright,
  The shadowy vales with feeding herds,
I from my lyre the music smite,
  Nor want for justly matching words.
All forces of the sea and air,
  All interests of hill and plain,
I so can sing, in seasons fair,
  That who hath felt may feel again.
Elated oft by such free songs,
  I think with utterance free to raise
That hymn for which the whole world longs,
  A worthy hymn in woman's praise;
A hymn bright-noted like a bird's,
  Arousing these song-sleepy times
With rhapsodies of perfect words,
  Ruled by returning kiss of rhymes.
But when I look on her and hope
  To tell with joy what I admire,
My thoughts lie cramp'd in narrow scope,
  Or in the feeble birth expire;
No mystery of well-woven speech,
  No simplest phrase of tenderest fall,
No liken'd excellence can reach
  Her, the most excellent of all,

The best half of creation's best,
  Its heart to feel, its eye to see,
The crown and complex of the rest,
  Its aim and its epitome.
Nay, might I utter my conceit,°
  'Twere after all a vulgar song,
For she's so simply, subtly sweet,
  My deepest rapture does her wrong.
Yet is it now my chosen task
  To sing her worth as Maid and Wife;
Nor happier post than this I ask,
To live her laureate[2] all my life.
On wings of love uplifted free,
  And by her gentleness made great,
I'll teach how noble man should be
  To match with such a lovely mate;
And then in her may move the more
  The woman's wish to be desired,
(By praise increased,) till both shall soar,
  With blissful emulations fired.
And, as geranium, pink,° or rose
  Is thrice itself through power of art,
So may my happy skill disclose
  New fairness even in her fair heart;
Until that churl shall nowhere be
  Who bends not, awed, before the throne
Of her affecting majesty,
  So meek, so far unlike our own;
Until (for who may hope too much
  From her who wields the powers of love?)
Our lifted lives at last shall touch
  That happy goal to which they move;
Until we find, as darkness rolls
  Away, and evil mists dissolve,
The nuptial contrasts are the poles

On which the heavenly spheres revolve.

1854–62

Endnotes

- Note 1: In Roman mythology the wife of the chief god (Jupiter) and a goddess presiding especially over the married life of women.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, to be the one who celebrates her in poetry.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *fancy, idea*Return to reference °
- °: *pink carnation*Return to reference °

JOHN RUSKIN

John Ruskin (1819–1900) began his career writing about art but eventually became one of England's fiercest social critics. In 1864 he delivered two lectures in the industrial city of Manchester—the first, "Of Kings' Treasuries," supporting the development of public libraries in the name of "noble education," and the second, "Of Queens' Gardens," on the special powers and duties of women. Published together the following year as *Sesame and Lilies*, the essays were considered ideal reading matter for middle-class young women and enjoyed exceptional sales for the remainder of the nineteenth century. In recent years "Of Queens' Gardens," with its assertions about the distinct differences between men and women, and their respective roles in the two separate spheres of public and private life, has become a classic text for the examination of Victorian ideology.

From Of Queens' Gardens

Now their separate characters are briefly these. The man's power is active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation and invention; his energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest, wherever war is just, wherever conquest necessary. But the woman's power is for rule, not for battle,—and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision. She sees the qualities of things, their claims, and their places. Her great function is Praise; she enters into no contest, but infallibly adjudges the crown of contest. By her office, and place, she is protected from all danger and temptation. The man, in his rough work in open world, must encounter all peril and trial;—to him, therefore, must be the failure, the offence, the inevitable error: often he must be wounded, or subdued; often misled; and *always* hardened. But he guards the woman from all this; within his house, as ruled by her, unless she herself has sought it, need enter no danger, no temptation, no cause of error or offence. This is the true nature of home—it is the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division. In so far as it is not this, it is not home; so far as the anxieties of the outer life penetrate into it, and the inconsistently-minded, unknown, unloved, or hostile society of the outer world is allowed by either husband or wife to cross the threshold, it ceases to be home; it is then only a part of that outer world which you have roofed over, and lighted fire in. But so far as it is a sacred place, a vestal temple, a temple of the hearth watched over by Household Gods, before whose faces none may come but those whom they can receive with love,—so far as it is this, and roof and fire are types only of a nobler shade and light,—shade as of the rock in a weary land, and light as of the Pharos[1] in the stormy sea;—so far it vindicates the name, and fulfils the praise, of Home.

And wherever a true wife comes, this home is always round her. The stars only may be over her head; the glowworm in the night-cold grass may be the only fire at her foot; but home is yet wherever she is; and for a noble woman it stretches far round her, better than ceiled with cedar, or painted with vermilion,[2] shedding its quiet light far, for those who else were homeless.

This, then, I believe to be,—will you not admit it to be?—the woman's true place and power. But do not you see that, to fulfil this, she must—as far as one can use such terms of a human creature—be incapable of error? So far as she rules, all must be right, or nothing is. She must be enduringly, incorruptibly good; instinctively, infallibly wise—wise, not for self-development, but for self-renunciation: wise, not that she may set herself above her husband, but that she may never fail from his side: wise, not with the narrowness of insolent and loveless pride, but with the passionate gentleness of an infinitely variable, because infinitely applicable, modesty of service—the true changefulness of woman. In that great sense—"La donna è mobile," not "Qual piúm' al vento";[3] no, nor yet "Variable as the shade, by the light quivering aspen made";[4] but variable as the *light*, manifold in fair and serene division, that it may take the colour of all that it falls upon, and exalt it.

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1864 **Endnotes** 1865

- Note 1: A lighthouse that was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World (its island is now part of the city of Alexandria). The phrase "rock in a weary land" alludes to Isaiah 32.2.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare with Jeremiah 22:14. "Ceiled": roofed over.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: "Women are as fickle as feathers in the wind," the first two lines of the famous aria by the womanizing duke in

Giuseppe Verdi's *Rigoletto* (1851).Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Sir Walter Scott, *Marmion* (1808) 6.30.Return to reference 4

MARRIAGE LAW

WILLIAM BLACKSTONE

William Blackstone (1723–1780) was an English jurist, judge, Tory politician, and author of the extremely influential *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (4 vols. 1765–70), which systematized and explained common law in accessible terms. In this passage, Blackstone explains the doctrine of "coverture," which dictated that married women were considered to be "one person in law" with their husbands.

From Commentaries on the Laws of England

By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection, and *cover*, she performs every thing; and is therefore called in our law-french a *feme-covert*; is said-to be *covert-baron*, or under the protection and influence of her husband, her *baron*, or lord; and her condition during her marriage is called her *coverture*. Upon this principle, of an union of person in husband and wife, depend almost all the legal rights, duties, and disabilities, that either of them acquire by the marriage. I speak not at present of the rights of property, but of such as are merely *personal*. For this reason, a man cannot grant any thing to his wife, or enter into covenant with her: for the grant would be to suppose her separate existence; and to covenant with her, would be only to covenant with himself: and therefore it is also generally true, that all compacts made between husband and wife, when single, are voided by the intermarriage. A woman indeed may be attorney[1] for her husband; for that implies no separation from, but is rather a representation of, her lord. And a husband may also bequeath any thing to his wife by will; for that cannot take effect till the coverture is determined by his death. The husband is bound to provide his wife with necessaries by law, as much as himself; and if she contracts debts for them, he is obliged to pay them: but for any thing besides necessaries, he is not chargeable. Also if a wife elopes, and lives with another man, the husband is not chargeable even for necessaries; at least if the person, who furnishes them, is sufficiently apprized of her elopement. If the wife be indebted before marriage, the husband is bound afterwards to pay the debt; for he has adopted her and her circumstances together. If the wife be injured in

her person or her property, she can bring no action for redress without her husband's concurrence, and in his name, as well as her own: neither can she be sued, without making the husband a defendant. There is indeed one case where the wife shall sue and be sued as a feme sole,[2] viz. where the husband has abjured the realm, or is banished: for then he is dead in law; and, the husband being thus disabled to sue for or defend the wife, it would be most unreasonable if she had no remedy, or could make no defence at all. In criminal prosecutions, it is true, the wife may be indicted and punished separately; for the union is only a civil union. But, in trials of any sort, they are not allowed to be evidence for, or against, each other: partly because it is impossible their testimony should be indifferent; but principally because of the union of person: and therefore, if they were admitted to be witnesses *for* each other, they would contradict one maxim of law, "*nemo in propria causa testis esse debet*;"[3] and if *against* each other, they would contradict another maxim, "*nemo tenetur seipsum accusare*."[4]

1756

Endnotes

- Note 1: A person who acts for another, usually in business or in legal affairs.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A woman without a husband.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: "No one should be a judge in his own cause" (Latin).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: "No man must accuse himself" (Latin).Return to reference 4

CAROLINE NORTON

After leaving her husband, George Norton, Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton, Lady Stirling-Maxwell (1808–1877), sought to support herself on the income from her writings. Her husband subsequently appropriated her earnings (legally, since under *coverture*, she had no right to claim property) and abducted their three sons (again, legally, since they belonged to him). He also (unsuccessfully) sued Whig prime minister, Lord Melbourne, for having an affair with his wife. When one of the three boys died after being thrown from his horse, Caroline Norton held her husband responsible for the death. Norton's work publicizing the worst consequences of coverture helped pass the Custody of Infants Act (1839), which gave legally separated women custody of children up to the age of seven and periodic access thereafter. She also worked to pass the Matrimonial Causes Act (1857), which redefined marriage as a contract, thus paving the way for the 1870 Married Women's Property Act.

From A Letter to the Queen on Lord Chancellor Cranworth's Marriage and Divorce Bill

An English wife cannot make a will. She may have children or kindred whom she may earnestly desire to benefit;—she may be separated from her husband, who may be living with a mistress; no matter: the law gives what she has to him, and no will she could make would be valid.

An English wife cannot legally claim her own earnings. Whether wages for manual labour, or payment for intellectual exertion, whether she weed potatoes, or keep a school, her salary is *the husband's*; and he could compel a second payment, and treat the first as void, if paid to the wife without his sanction.

An English wife may not leave her husband's house. Not only can he sue her for "restitution of conjugal rights," but he has a right to enter the house of any friend or relation with whom she may take refuge, and who may "harbour her,"—as it is termed,—and carry her away by force, with or without the aid of the police.

If the wife sue for separation for cruelty, it must be "cruelty that endangers life or limb," and if she has once forgiven, or, in legal phrase, "*condoned*" his offences, she cannot plead them; though her past forgiveness only proves that she endured as long as endurance was possible.

If her husband take proceedings for a divorce, she is not, in the first instance, allowed to defend herself. She has no means of proving the falsehood of his allegations. She is not represented by attorney, nor permitted to be considered a party to the suit between him and her supposed lover, for "damages." Lord Brougham affirmed in the House of Lords: "*in that action the character of the woman was at immediate issue, although she was not prosecuted. The consequence not unfrequently was, that the character of a woman*

was sworn away; instances were known in which, by collusion between the husband and a pretended paramour, the character of the wife has been destroyed. All this could take place, and yet the wife had no defence; she was excluded from Westminster-hall, and behind her back, by the principles of our jurisprudence, her character was tried between her husband and the man called her paramour."

If an English wife be guilty of infidelity, her husband can divorce *her* so as to marry again; but she cannot divorce the husband *a vinculo*,[1] however profligate he may be. No law court can divorce in England. A special Act of Parliament annulling the marriage, is passed for each case. The House of Lords grants this almost as a matter of course to the husband, but not to the wife. In only four instances (two of which were cases of incest), has the wife obtained a divorce to marry again.

She cannot prosecute for a libel. Her husband must prosecute; and in cases of enmity and separation, of course she is without a remedy.

She cannot sign a lease, or transact responsible business.

She cannot claim support, as a matter of personal right, from her husband. The general belief and nominal rule is, that her husband is "bound to maintain her." That is not the law. He is not bound to *her*. He is bound to his country; bound to see that she does not cumber the parish in which she resides. If it be proved that means sufficient are at her disposal, from relatives or friends, her husband is quit of his obligation, and need not contribute a farthing: even if he have deserted her; or be in receipt of money which is hers by inheritance.

She cannot bind her husband by any agreement, except through a third party. A contract formally drawn out by a lawyer,—witnessed, and signed by her husband,—is *void in law*; and he can evade payment of an income so assured, by the legal quibble that "a man cannot contract with his own wife."

Separation from her husband by consent, or for his ill usage, does not alter their mutual relation. He retains the right to divorce her *after* separation,—as before,—though he himself be unfaithful.

Her being, on the other hand, of spotless character, and without reproach, gives her no advantage in law. She may have withdrawn from his roof knowing that he lives with "his "faithful housekeeper": having suffered personal violence at his hands; having "condoned" much, and being able to prove it by unimpeachable testimony: or he may have shut the doors of her house against her: all this is quite immaterial: the law takes no cognisance of which is to blame. As *her husband*, he has a right to all that is hers: as *his wife*, she has no right to anything that is his. As her husband, he may divorce her (if truth or false swearing can do it): as his wife, the utmost "divorce" she could obtain, is permission to reside alone,—married to his name. The marriage ceremony is a civil bond for him,—and an indissoluble sacrament for her; and the rights of mutual property which that ceremony is ignorantly supposed to confer, are made absolute for him, and null for her.

1855

Endnotes

- Note 1: Absolutely (Latin); thus, divorce *a vinculo* dissolves the marriage completely, as opposed to divorce *a mensa et thoro*, which is a divorce of "bed and board" only and does not allow either party to remarry.Return to reference 1

POOR WOMEN AND WOMEN'S WORK

FRIEDRICH ENGELS

Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) is best known as the co-author, with Karl Marx, of *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), but his *Condition of the Working Class in England* offers a scathing denunciation of the worst consequences of industrialization. A substantial portion of that work appears in Engels's entry in this volume. Here he describes the specific consequences of factory work for the reorganization of workers' domestic lives. Women and children were often preferred to adult men as employees because of the relatively low wages they were traditionally offered.

From The Condition of the Working Class in England

The employment of the wife dissolves the family utterly and of necessity, and this dissolution, in our present society, which is based upon the family, brings the most demoralizing consequences for parents as well as children. A mother who has no time to trouble herself about her child, to perform the most ordinary loving services for it during its first year, who scarcely indeed sees it, can be no real mother to the child, must inevitably grow indifferent to it, treat it unlovingly like a stranger. The children who grow up under such conditions are utterly ruined for later family life, can never feel at home in the family which they themselves found, because they have always been accustomed to isolation, and they contribute therefore to the already general undermining of the family in the working class. A similar dissolution of the family is brought about by the employment of the children. When they get on far enough to earn more than they cost their parents from week to week, they begin to pay the parents a fixed sum for board and lodging, and keep the rest for themselves. This often happens from the fourteenth or fifteenth year. In a word, the children emancipate themselves, and regard the paternal dwelling as a lodging-house, which they often exchange for another, as suits them.

In many cases the family is not wholly dissolved by the employment of the wife, but turned upside down. The wife supports the family, the husband sits at home, tends the children, sweeps the room and cooks. This case happens very frequently; in Manchester alone, many hundred such men could be cited, condemned to domestic occupations. It is easy to imagine the wrath aroused among the working men by this reversal of all relations within the family, while the other social conditions remain unchanged. There lies before me a letter from an English working man, Robert

Pounder, Baron's Buildings, Woodhouse, Moorside, in Leeds (the bourgeoisie may hunt him up there; I give the exact address for the purpose), written by him to Oastler.

He relates how another working man, being on tramp, came to St Helens, in Lancashire, and there looked up an old friend.

> He found him in a miserable, damp cellar, scarcely furnished; and when my poor friend went in, there sat poor Jack near the fire, and what did he, think you? why he sat and mended his wife's stockings with the bodkin; and as soon as he saw his old friend at the doorpost, he tried to hide them. But Joe, that is my friend's name, had seen it, and said: 'Jack, what the devil art thou doing? Where is the missus? Why, is that thy work?' and poor Jack was ashamed, and said: 'No, I know this is not my work, but my poor missus is i'th'factory; she has to leave at half-past five and works till eight at night, and then she is so knocked up that she cannot do aught when she gets home, so I have to do everything for her what I can, for I have no work, nor had any for more nor three years, and I shall never have any more work while I live'; and then he wept a big tear. Jack again said: 'There is work enough for women folks and childer hereabouts, but none for men; thou mayest sooner find a hundred pound on the road than work for men—but I should never have believed that either thou or any one else would have seen me mending my wife's stockings, for it is bad work. But she can hardly stand on her feet; I am afraid she will be laid up, and then I don't know what is to become of us, for it's a good bit that she has been the man in the house and I the woman; it is bad work, Joe;' and he cried bitterly, and said, 'It has not been always so.' 'No,' said Joe; 'but when thou hadn't no work, how hast thou not shifted?' 'I'll tell thee, Joe, as well as I can, but it was bad enough; thou knowest when I got married I had work plenty, and thou knows I was not lazy.' 'No, that thou wert not.' 'And we had a good furnished house, and Mary need not go to work. I could work for the two of us; but now the world is

> upside down. Mary has to work and I have to stop at home, mind the childer, sweep and wash, bake and mend; and, when the poor woman comes home at night, she is knocked up. Thou knows, Joe, it's hard for one that was used different.' 'Yes, boy, it is hard.' And then Jack began to cry again, and he wished he had never married, and that he had never been born; but he had never thought, when he wed Mary, that it would come to this. 'I have often cried over it,' said Jack. Now when Joe heard this, he told me that he had cursed and damned the factories, and the masters, and the Government, with all the curses that he had learned while he was in the factory from a child.

Can any one imagine a more insane state of things than that described in this letter? And yet this condition, which unsexes the man and takes from the woman all womanliness without being able to bestow upon the man true womanliness, or the woman true manliness—this condition which degrades in the most shameful way both sexes, and, through them, humanity, is the last result of our much-praised civilization, the final achievement of all the efforts and struggles of hundreds of generations to improve their own situation and that of their posterity. We must either despair of mankind, and its aims and efforts, when we see all our labour and toil result in such a mockery, or we must admit that human society has hitherto sought salvation in a false direction; we must admit that so total a reversal of the position of the sexes can have come to pass only because the sexes have been placed in a false position from the beginning. If the reign of the wife over the husband, as inevitably brought about by the factory system, is inhuman, the pristine rule of the husband over the wife must have been inhuman too. If the wife can now base her supremacy upon the fact that she supplies the greater part, nay, the whole of the common possession, the necessary inference is that this community of possession is no true and rational one, since one member of the family boasts offensively of contributing the greater share. If the family of our present society is being thus dissolved, this dissolution merely shows that, at

bottom, the binding tie of this family was not family affection, but private interest lurking under the cloak of a pretended community of possessions.

1845

ANONYMOUS

In early February 1858 a letter appeared in the London *Times* above the signature "One More Unfortunate." This individual, who claimed to be a prostitute, described her respectable upbringing and her experience as a governess, lamented her disgrace, and called on men to be more compassionate in their reform efforts. Responding in part to this piece, another letter, also apparently from a prostitute and titled "The Great Social Evil," was then published on February 24, 1858. Although it is impossible to establish definitively whether the letter writers were genuinely who they said they were, the story of how the second correspondent came to be a prostitute, which appears in the following extract, would have seemed extremely plausible to contemporary readers. This selection can profitably be compared with other representations and considerations of prostitutes and "fallen women" in this volume, such as those that appear in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poem "Jenny" (1870) and his painting *Found* (1855) and William Holman Hunt's painting *The Awakening Conscience* (1853–54).

The Great Social Evil

To the Editor of the Times

Sir,—another "Unfortunate," but of a class entirely different from the one who has already instructed the public in your columns, presumes to address you.

I am a stranger to all the fine sentiments which still linger in the bosom of your correspondent. I have none of those youthful recollections which, contrasting her early days with her present life, aggravate the misery of the latter. My parents did not give me any education; they did not instil into my mind virtuous precepts nor set me a good example. All my experiences in early life were gleaned among associates who knew nothing of the laws of God but by dim tradition and faint report, and whose chiefest triumphs of wisdom consisted in picking their way through the paths of destitution in which they were cast by cunning evasion or in open defiance of the laws of man.



Found, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The artist began this painting in 1854, but it was still unfinished at the time of his death in 1882.

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Let me tell you something of my parents. My father's most profitable occupation was brickmaking. When not employed at this he did anything he could get to do. My mother worked with him in the

brickfield, and so did I and a progeny of brothers and sisters; for, somehow or other, although my parents occupied a very unimportant space in the world, it pleased God to make them fruitful. We all slept in the same room. There were few privacies, few family secrets in our house.

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I was a very pretty child, and had a sweet voice; of course I used to sing. Most London boys and girls of the lower classes sing. "My face is my fortune, kind Sir, she said" was the ditty on which I bestowed most pains, and my father and mother would wink knowingly as I sang it. The latter would also tell me how pretty she was when young, and how she sang, and what a fool she had been, and how well she might have done had she been wise.

Frequently we had quite a stir in our colony.[1] Some young lady who had quitted the paternal restraints, or perhaps, been started off, none knew whither or how, to seek her fortune, would reappear among us with a profusion of ribands, fine clothes, and lots of cash. Visiting the neighbours, treating indiscriminately, was the order of the day on such occasions, without any more definite information of the means by which the dazzling transformation had been effected than could be conveyed by knowing winks and the words "luck" and "friends." Then she would disappear and leave us in our dirt, penury, and obscurity. You cannot conceive, Sir, how our young ambition was stirred by these visitations.

Now commences an important era in my life. I was a fine, robust, healthy girl, 13 years of age. I had larked with the boys of my own age. I had huddled with them, boys and girls together, all night long in our common haunts. I had seen much and heard abundantly of the mysteries of the sexes. To me such things had been matters of common sight and common talk. For some time I had trembled and coquetted on the verge of a strong curiosity, and a natural desire, and without a particle of affection, scarce a partiality, I lost what?

not my virtue, for I never had any. That which is commonly, but untruly called virtue, I gave away.

You reverend Mr. Philanthropist—what call you virtue? Is it not the principle, the essence, which keeps watch and ward over the conduct, over the substance, the materiality? No such principle ever kept watch and ward over me, and I repeat that I never lost that which I never had—my virtue.

According to my own ideas at the time I only extended my rightful enjoyments. Opportunity was not long wanting to put my newly-acquired knowledge to profitable use. In the commencement of my fifteenth year one of our beribanded visitors took me off, and introduced me to the great world, and thus commenced my career as what you better classes call a prostitute. I cannot say that I felt any other shame than the bashfulness of a noviciate introduced to strange society. Remarkable for good looks, and no less so for good temper, I gained money, dressed gaily, and soon agreeably astonished my parents and old neighbours by making a descent upon them.

Passing over the vicissitudes of my course, alternating between reckless gaiety and extreme destitution, I improved myself greatly; and at the age of 18 was living partly under the protection of one who thought he discovered that I had talent, and some good qualities as well as beauty, who treated me more kindly and considerately than I had ever before been treated, and thus drew from me something like a feeling of regard, but not sufficiently strong to lift me to that sense of my position which the so-called virtuous and respectable members of society seem to entertain. Under the protection of this gentleman, and encouraged by him, I commenced the work of my education; that portion of education which is comprised in some knowledge of my own language and the ordinary accomplishments of my sex;—moral science, as I believe it is called, has always been an enigma to me, and is so to this day.

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Now, what if I am a prostitute, what business has society to abuse me? Have I received any favours at the hands of society? If I am a hideous cancer in society, are not the causes of the disease to be sought in the rottenness of the carcass? Am I not its legitimate child; no bastard, Sir? Why does my unnatural parent repudiate me, and what has society ever done for me, that I should do anything for it, and what have I ever done against society that it should drive me into a corner and crush me to the earth? I have neither stolen (at least not since I was a child), nor murdered, nor defrauded. I earn my money and pay my way, and try to do good with it, according to my ideas of good. I do not get drunk, nor fight, nor create uproar in the streets or out of them. I do not use bad language. I do not offend the public eye by open indecencies. I go to the Opera, I go to Almack's,[2] I go to the theatres, I go to quiet, well-conducted casinos, I go to all places of public amusement, behaving myself with as much propriety as society can exact. I pay business visits to my tradespeople, the most fashionable of the West-end.[3] My milliners, my silk-mercers,[4] my bootmaker know, all of them, who I am and how I live, and they solicit my patronage as earnestly and cringingly as if I were Madam, the lady of the right rev. patron of the Society for the Suppression of Vice.[5] They find my money as good and my pay better (for we are robbed on every hand) than that of Madam, my Lady; and, if all the circumstances and conditions of our lives had been reversed, would Madam, my Lady, have done better or been better than I?

I speak for others as well as for myself, for the very great majority, nearly all of the real undisguised prostitutes in London, spring from my class, and are made by and under pretty much such conditions of life as I have narrated, and particularly by untutored and unrestrained intercourse of the sexes in early life. We come from the dregs of society, as our so-called betters term it. What business has society to have dregs—such dregs as we? You railers of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, you the pious, the moral, the respectable, as you call yourselves, who stand on your smooth and pleasant side of the great gulf you have dug and keep between

yourselves and the dregs, why don't you bridge it over, or fill it up, and by some humane and generous process absorb us into your leavened mass, until we become interpenetrated with goodness like yourselves? Why stand on your eminence shouting that we should be ashamed of ourselves? What have we to be ashamed of, we who do not know what shame is—the shame you mean? I conduct myself prudently, and defy you and your policemen too. Why stand you there mouthing with sleek face about morality? What is morality? Will you make us responsible for what we never knew? Teach us what is right and tutor us in good before you punish us for doing wrong. We who are the real prostitutes of the true natural growth of society, and no impostors, will not be judged by "One more Unfortunate," nor measured by any standard of her setting up. She is a mere chance intruder in our ranks, and has no business there.

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Hurling big figures at us, it is said that there are 80,000 of us in London alone—which is a monstrous falsehood—and of this 80,000, poor hardworking sewing girls, sewing women, are numbered in by thousands and called indiscriminately prostitutes; writing, preaching, speechifying, that they have lost their virtue too.

It is a cruel calumny to call them in mass prostitutes; and, as for their virtue, they lose it as one loses his watch who is robbed by the highway thief. Their virtue is the watch, and society is the thief. These poor women toiling on starvation wages, while penury, misery, and famine clutch them by the throat and say, "Render up your body or die."

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Admire this magnificent shop in this fashionable street; its front, fittings, and decorations cost not less than a thousand pounds. The respectable master of the establishment keeps his carriage, and lives in his countryhouse. He has daughters too; his patronesses are fine

ladies, the choicest impersonations of society. Do they think, as they admire the taste and elegance of that tradesman's show, of the poor creatures who wrought it, and of what they were paid for it? Do they reflect on the weary toiling fingers, on the eyes dim with watching, on the bowels yearning with hunger, on the bended frames, on the broken constitutions, on poor human nature driven to its coldest corner and reduced to its narrowest means in the production of these luxuries and adornments? This is an old story! Would it not be truer and more charitable to call these poor souls "victims?"—some gentler, some more humane name than prostitute—to soften by some Christian expression, if you cannot better the un-Christian system, the opprobrium of a fate to which society has itself driven them by the direst straits? What business has society to point its finger in scorn, and to raise its voice in reprobation of them? Are they not its children, born of its cold indifference, of its callous selfishness, of its cruel pride?

Sir, I have trespassed on your patience beyond limit, and yet much remains to be said, which I leave for further communication if you think proper to insert this. The difficulty of dealing with the evil is not so great as society considers it. Setting aside "the sin," we are not so bad as we are thought to be. The difficulty is for society to set itself, with the necessary earnestness, self-humiliation, and self-denial to the work. But of this hereafter. To deprive us of proper and harmless amusements, to subject us in mass to the pressure of force —of force wielded, for the most part, by ignorant, and often by brutal men—is only to add the cruelty of active persecution to the cruelty of the passive indifference which made us as we are.

I remain your humble servant,
ANOTHER UNFORTUNATE

1858

Endnotes

- Note 1: That is, neighborhood, group of streets.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Assembly rooms, the scene of social functions.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The affluent area of central London and location of fashionable shops and theaters.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Dealers in textiles.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A society founded in 1802.Return to reference 5

JOSEPHINE BUTLER

Josephine Butler (1828–1906) was a prominent opponent of the Contagious Diseases Acts that required the medical inspection of all women suspected of prostitution in towns in which army and navy forces were stationed. Butler and others rejected the notion that the Acts constituted an effective way to curb the spread of venereal disease—their supposed aim—by objecting to the sexual double standard involved in examining only women, not men; the violation of basic rights involved in women's inability to refuse examination; the intrusiveness of the examinations; and the negative consequences of the examinations, since once known to have been examined, women were often unable to get any work other than prostitution. The overall effect, they argued, was to legitimate prostitution and to create a standing pool of prostitutes for the military.

From Testimony Before the Royal Commission upon the Administration and Operation of the Contagious Diseases

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In the original protest issued by the Ladies' Association[1] in January 1870 there occurred the following words, which express very well my own sense of the matter:

> We protest against this legislation, inasmuch as a moral restraint is withdrawn the moment the State recognizes and provides convenience for a vice, which by providing this convenience it declares to be necessary and venial.

The expression used is—a moral restraint. We have challenged the supporters of the Acts to answer this, and in not one single case have I ever received an answer. The only answer attempted has been this: "The ladies are mistaken if they imagine the fear of the disease acts as a check upon youth." Now it is not the fear of disease to which I allude; it is a different motive, and a better motive. It is a restraining moral motive which is taken away from our male youth by the presence in the midst of us of a recognised system of harlotry. We claim that laws shall not be made which teach, in an indirect and subtle, but most effectual manner, that impurity of life is not a sin but a necessity. We claim that laws shall not be made whose practical effect, so far as they are successful at all, is to offer protection and immunity to the sinner in the practice of his sin. Even a limited knowledge of human nature, and of history, reveals to us most clearly the inevitable connection between offered protection and a general increase of licentiousness. The elevation of impure and unlawful intercourse, to the dignity of a recognised

traffic under legal regulations, exercises a most baneful influence on the community. When, through the base teaching of a base law, a law grounded on a supposed necessity of impurity, the conscience of a people becomes dimmed and darkened, the foundations of virtue are undermined, the generations to come cease to discern clearly between good and evil, self-control is abandoned, and vice is increased. Neither can our moral objections to these Acts be met by assurances that a certain number of women are reclaimed under their operations. I ask where are the men reclaimed by them? As mothers of sons we demand to know what the influence of these Acts is on young men. It is vain to restore fallen women to virtue on the one hand, while on the other you stimulate the demand for these victims. Prove to us, if you can, that these Acts promote chastity among men, for that is what we are concerned about.

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The great evil, with its unpleasant physical consequences, must be met from a variety of sides at once. Legislation alone will not do it. Seduction must be punished. At present for the purpose of seduction, and of seduction only, our law declares every female child a woman at 12 years of age. I am ashamed to have to confess to such a shameful state of the law before you gentlemen, but a child is a woman, for that purpose alone, at 12 years of age. I know from my experience amongst this class of women, how many have become so from that cause. The law of bastardy must be altered. At present the responsibility of illegitimate children is thrown on the mothers only, the fathers are irresponsible. Better laws in this direction would aid in diminishing the causes of prostitution. A higher standard of public opinion as to the vice of men,—that is a thing in which we women are most deeply interested; we have had enough to do with the reclamation of women, we know about that, but we know now that nothing can be done until the vices of men are attacked and checked. Above all things a higher standard with regard to the morality of men is needed, and we, thousands of us,

are banded together to attain that if possible. The laws which we shall claim shall be constitutional, they shall not be a breach of the Constitution, they shall be moral in their tendency, and above all they shall be just; that is, they shall be laws which shall tend to repress crimes which we abhor equally in both sexes, and which shall deal with the vice itself, and not merely with its physical effects. Our measures will be directed against prostitution itself, and, with your permission, I will just call your attention to this, that whereas all legislation hitherto which is at all of the right kind has been directed against one sex only, we insist that it shall be directed against both sexes, and whereas it has been directed against the poor only, we insist, and the working men insist, that it shall also apply to the rich profligate. Partial laws, however excellent, will not effect the purification of society. It is quite the fashion, I find, in London, among the upper classes, to talk of this subject as if women were tempters, harpies, devils, while men are wholly innocent; and in every case the tempted, and legislation, following out this idea, has in almost all cases been protective for men and punitive for women. It cannot be said that men, in our own days, are entirely innocent and entirely the victims, while women are the sole assailants of purity. It cannot be said there is no such thing as seduction of young girls by gentlemen of the upper classes. It cannot be said there is no such thing as profuse patronage of houses of ill-fame by rich profligate men. I could tell you much of that from my own experience. Therefore we are profoundly convinced, and thousands among the working classes share our convictions in the matter, that legislation, however pure its aim, which is directed against the weaker sex only, will fail to accomplish any reduction in the amount of misery and sin there is amongst us. That is the general outline of a series of remedies, some of which it is intended to be proposed to the Legislature to adopt as legislative remedies. We have other remedies, especially with regard to increasing the number of industrial pursuits for women, which I should say is the most important, from the woman’s side of the matter, but could hardly be touched, I suppose, by legislation.

Endnotes

- Note 1: The National and Ladies' Association for Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts was established in 1869 by Butler and Elizabeth Wolstenholme. Many influential women, including Florence Nightingale and Harriet Martineau, either joined the Association or publicly approved its work.Return to reference 1

WALTER BESANT

Walter Besant (1836–1901) was a literary critic, historian, and novelist. His history *The Queen's Reign* (1897) celebrated the improvements he felt he had witnessed during his lifetime.

From The Queen's Reign

[THE TRANSFORMATION OF WOMEN'S STATUS BETWEEN 1837 AND 1897]

Let me present to you, first, an early Victorian girl, born about the Waterloo year;[1] next, her granddaughter, born about 1875. * * *

The young lady of 1837 * * * cannot reason on any subject whatever because of her ignorance—as she herself would say, because she is a woman. In her presence, and indeed in the presence of ladies generally, men talk trivialities. * * * It has often been charged against Thackeray[2] that his good women were insipid. Thackeray, like most artists, could only draw the women of his own time, and at that time they were undoubtedly insipid. Men, I suppose, liked them so. To be childishly ignorant; to carry shrinking modesty so far as to find the point of a shoe projecting beyond the folds of a frock indelicate; to confess that serious subjects were beyond a woman's grasp; never even to pretend to form an independent judgment; to know nothing of Art, History, Science, Literature, Politics, Sociology, Manners—men liked these things; women yielded to please the men; her very ignorance formed a subject of laudable pride with the Englishwoman of the Forties. * * * There was something Oriental in the seclusion of women in the home, and their exclusion from active and practical life.

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A "New Woman. " This illustration from American magazine *Harper's Bazar* ("*Bazaar*" from 1930 on) features two of the three most common elements that appeared in representations of the "New Woman": bicycles, pantaloons, and cigarettes.

Let us turn to the Englishwoman—the young Englishwoman—of 1897. She is educated. Whatever things are taught to the young man are taught to the young woman. If she wants to explore the wickedness of the world she can do so, for it is all in the books. The secrets of Nature are not closed to her; she can learn the structure of the body if she wishes. At school, at college, she studies just as the young man studies, but harder and with greater concentration. * * * She has invaded the professions. She cannot become a priest, because the Oriental prejudice against women still prevails, so that women in High Church places are not allowed to sing in the choir, or to play the organ, not to speak of preaching. * * * In the same way she cannot enter the Law. Some day she will get over this restriction, but not yet. For a long time she was kept out of medicine. That restriction is now removed; she can, and she does, practice as a physician or a surgeon, generally the former.[3] I believe that she has shown in this profession, as in her university studies, she can stand, *inter pares,*[4] among her equals and her peers, not her superiors. There is no branch of literature in which women have not distinguished themselves. * * * In music they compose, but not greatly; they play and sing divinely. The acting of the best among them is equal to that of any living man. They have become journalists, in some cases of remarkable ability; in fact, there are thousands of women who now make their livelihood by writing in all its branches. As for the less common professions—the accountants, architects, actuaries, agents—they are rapidly being taken over by women.

It is no longer a question of necessity; women do not ask themselves whether they must earn their own bread, or live a life of dependence. Necessity or no necessity they demand work, with independence and personal liberty. Whether they will take upon them the duties and responsibilities of marriage, they postpone for further consideration. I believe that, although in the first eager running there are many who profess to despise marriage, the voice of nature and the instinctive yearning for love will prevail.

Personal independence: that is the keynote of the situation. Mothers no longer attempt the old control over their daughters: they would find it impossible. The girls go off by themselves on their bicycles;[5] they go about as they please; they neither compromise themselves nor get talked about. For the first time in man's history it is regarded as a right and proper thing to trust a girl as a boy insists upon being trusted. Out of this personal freedom will come, I daresay, a change in the old feelings of young man to maiden. He will not see in her a frail, tender plant which must be protected from cold winds; she can protect herself perfectly well. He will not see in her any longer a creature of sweet emotions and pure aspirations, coupled with a complete ignorance of the world, because she already knows all that she wants to know. Nor will he see in her a companion whose mind is a blank, and whose conversation is insipid, because she already knows as much as he knows himself. Nor, again, will he see in her a housewife whose whole time will be occupied in superintending servants or in making, brewing, confecting things with her own hand.

1897

Endnotes

- Note 1: That is, 1815, the year Napoleon Bonaparte was defeated by British and Prussian forces at the Battle of Waterloo.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: William Makepeace Thackeray (1811–1863), British novelist. The character of Amelia Sedley, in his novel *Vanity Fair* (1848), is cited by Besant as typical of the "insipid" women of the 1840s.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The first woman to have her name placed on the British Medical Register was Elizabeth Blackwell (who earned her degree in the United States), in 1859; it took another two decades for women to gain the right to study and take the required examinations in medicine in Great Britain.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Among equals (Latin).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Modern bicycles (with wheels of equal size and pneumatic tires) began to be manufactured in the late 1880s and became extremely popular in Europe and the United States.Return to reference 5

PATHOLOGIZING SEX: PROSTITUTION, HOMOSEXUALITY, AND THE "NEW WOMAN"

WILLIAM ACTON

William Acton (1813–1875) was a medical doctor well known for his publications on sexuality and reproduction. His belief that semen is a vital fluid whose emission threatens to drain the energy of the adult male was a common one, although other aspects of his work were more idiosyncratic. It is important to emphasize that medical science in the nineteenth century was as subject to internal debate as it is today, and that there is no way to know whether there was any correlation between medical theory and personal practice. That said, Acton's insistence that most women are "not very much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind" corresponds to many aspects of the idealization of women described elsewhere in this section.

From The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive System in Childhood, Youth, Adult Age, and Advanced Age

From *Masturbation in Childhood*

A vigorous healthy boy is not likely to have any tendency to debase himself, and it is a question with many if it is well (on his going to school) to caution him against the vile habit of masturbation and its consequences. My own impression long was, that it would be a pity to poison the mind of a high-spirited lad with any cautions about vile practices; but the confessions of many, who, in ignorance of the results, have, by the example of others, been led to practice masturbation, have very much altered my opinion; I believe that in many cases a parent *should* at least hint to his son that he may very possibly have to witness infamous practices, and conjure him at once manfully to resist and oppose them, pointing out at the same time the consequences to which they tend. Of course he runs the risk of tainting an ingenuous mind when he broaches such a subject, and unfolds before it this distressing page in the book of knowledge of good and evil. But when it is needful he should, in my opinion, accept the grave responsibility; for knowing what I know, and seeing what I see, I could not face the greater unknown ill of dismissing my child to the probability of contamination by those whose corruption has but lately gone before, without an attempt to save him. I esteem it false delicacy and a wrong, that a parent should demur to accept the office of exponent, when he can, at the most, anticipate by a few days or weeks the offices of a schoolmaster in vice, as ignorant of consequences as the pupil, and unable to administer the antidote with the poison.

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From *Marital Excesses*

Hitherto we have applied the word *excess* chiefly to illicit sexual connection. Of course, whether extravagant in degree or not, all such connection is, from one point of view, an excess. But any warning against sexual dangers would be very incomplete if it did not extend to the excesses too often committed by married persons in ignorance of their ill effects. Too frequent emission of the life-giving fluid, and too frequent sexual excitement of the nervous system, is, as we have seen, in itself most destructive. Whether it occurs in married or unmarried people has little, if anything, to do with the result. The married man who thinks that, because he is a married man, he can commit no excess, however often the act of sexual congress is repeated, will suffer as certainly and as seriously as the debauchee who acts on the same principle in his indulgences, perhaps more certainly, from his very ignorance and from his not taking those precautions and following those rules which a career of vice is apt to teach a man. Many a man has, until he married, lived a most continent life;—so has his wife. But as soon as they are wedded, intercourse is indulged in night after night, neither party having any idea that this is an excess which the system of neither can bear, and which to the man, at least, is simple ruin. The practice is continued till health is impaired, sometimes permanently, and when a patient is at last obliged to seek medical advice, he is thunderstruck at learning that his sufferings arise from such a cause as this. People often appear to think that connection may be repeated just as regularly and almost as often as meals may. Till they are told, the idea never enters their heads that they have been guilty of great and almost criminal excess; nor is this to be wondered at, as such a cause of disease is seldom hinted at by the medical man they consult.

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From *Want of Sexual Feeling in the Female a Cause of Impotence*

We have already mentioned lack of sexual feeling in the female as not an uncommon cause of apparent or temporary impotence in the male. There is so much ignorance on the subject, and false ideas as to women's sexual condition are productive of so much mischief, that I need offer no apology for giving here, before we proceed, the true state of the case.

I have taken pains to obtain and compare the opinions of large numbers of competent witnesses on this subject, and the result of my inquiries I may briefly epitomize as follows: I should say that the majority of women (happily for them) are not very much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind. What men are habitually, women are only exceptionally. It is too true, I admit, as the divorce courts show, that there are some few women who have sexual desires so strong that they surpass those of men, and shock public feeling by their exhibition. I admit, of course, the existence of sexual excitement terminating in nymphomania,[1] a form of insanity that those accustomed to visit lunatic asylums must be fully conversant with; but, with these sad exceptions, there can be no doubt that sexual feeling in the female is in abeyance, and that it requires positive and considerable excitement to be roused at all; and even if roused (which in many instances it never can be), is very moderate compared with that of the male. Men, and particularly young men, form their ideas of women's feelings from what they notice early in life among loose, or at least low and vulgar, women. There is always a certain number of females who, though not ostensibly in the rank of prostitutes, make a kind of trade of a pretty face. They are fond of admiration, they like to attract the attention of those immediately above them. Any susceptible boy is easily led to believe, whether he is altogether overcome by the syren or not, that she, and therefore all women, must have at least as strong passions as himself. Such women, however, will give a very false idea of the condition of female sexual feeling in general.

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Married men—medical men—or married women themselves, would tell a very different tale, and vindicate female nature from the vile aspersions cast on it by the abandoned conduct and ungoverned lusts of a few of its worst examples.

There are many females who never feel any sexual excitement whatever. Others, again, immediately after each period, do become, to a limited degree, capable of experiencing it; but this capacity is often temporary, and may cease entirely till the next menstrual period. The best mothers, wives, and managers of households know little or nothing of sexual indulgences. Love of home, children, and domestic duties are the only passions they feel.[2]

As a general rule, a modest woman seldom desires any sexual gratification for herself. She submits to her husband, but only to please him; and, but for the desire of maternity, would far rather be relieved from his attentions. No nervous or feeble young man need, therefore, be deterred from marriage by any exaggerated notion of the duties required from him. The married woman has no wish to be treated on the footing of a mistress.

1858

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  I shall probably have no other opportunity of noticing that, as excision of the clitoris has been recommended for the cure of this complaint, Kobelt thinks that it would not be necessary to remove the whole of the clitoris in nymphomania; the same results (that is destruction of veneral desire) would follow if the glans clitoridis had been alone removed, as it is now considered that it is in the glans alone in which the sensitive nerves expand. This view I do not agree with, as I have already stated

with regard to the analogous structures of the penis, p. 115 [*Acton's note*].

"Nymphomania": psychological condition characterized by insatiable sexual desire. "Kobelt": Georg Ludwig Kobelt (1804–1857), German anatomist who described the clitoris.

Return to reference 1

- Note 2:
  The physiologist will not be surprised that the human female should in these respects differ but little from the female among animals. We well know it as a fact, that the dog or horse is not allowed approach to the female except at particular seasons. In the human female, indeed, I believe, it is rather from the wish of pleasing or gratifying the husband than from any strong sexual feeling, that cohabitation is habitually allowed. Certainly, it is so during the months of gestation. I have known instances where the female has during gestation evinced positive loathing for any marital familiarity whatever. In some of these instances, indeed, feeling has been sacrificed to duty, and the wife has endured, with all the self-martyrdom of womanhood, what was almost worse than death [*Acton's note*].
  Return to reference 2

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT ACT

The Criminal Law Amendment Act focused on raising the age of consent for girls from thirteen to sixteen; however, it became most famous for the Amendment introduced by Member of Parliament Henry Labouchère that made "gross indecencies" between men a misdemeanor regardless of the age—or consent—of the participants. The vagueness of the category of "gross indecencies" meant that any homosexual activity between men could lead to a prison sentence. Oscar Wilde is the most famous victim of the Labouchère Amendment, as it came to be called: his period of hard labor in prison led directly to his death. It is worth noting that the Amendment only pertained to men; lesbianism was not even discussed in Parliament until 1921, when an amendment was discarded out of concern not to call attention to such practices. The Labouchère Amendment remained in place until 1967.

From the Criminal Law Amendment Act

[11. *Outrages on decency.*] Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or is a party to the commission of or procures (*a*) or attempts (*b*) to procure the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency (*c*) with another male person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor,[1] and being convicted thereof shall be liable at the discretion of the court to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour.

1885

Endnotes

- Note 1: Although the term "misdemeanor" suggests a minor infraction, as the Amendment makes clear, it could be punished with significant prison time.Return to reference 1

LORD ALFRED DOUGLAS

Lord Alfred Douglas (1870–1945), English poet, may be most famous as Oscar Wilde's lover and the occasion for the lawsuit that led to Wilde's incarceration. When Douglas's father publicly accused Wilde of homosexuality, Wilde sued him for criminal libel—which then led to his imprisonment under the Labouchère amendment. Douglas's poem "Two Loves" was cited as evidence against Wilde.

From Two Loves

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And lo! within the garden of my dream
I saw two walking on a shining plain
Of golden light. The one did joyous seem
And fair and blooming, and a sweet refrain
Came from his lips; he sang of pretty maids
And joyous love of comely girl and boy,
His eyes were bright, and 'mid the dancing blades
Of golden grass his feet did trip for joy;
And in his hands he held an ivory lute
With strings of gold that were as maidens' hair,
And sang with voice as tuneful as a flute,
And round his neck three chains of roses were.
But he that was his comrade walked aside;
He was full sad and sweet, and his large eyes
Were strange with wondrous brightness, staring wide
With gazing; and he sighed with many sighs
That moved me, and his cheeks were wan and white
Like pallid lilies, and his lips were red
Like poppies, and his hands he clenchéd tight
And yet again unclenchéd, and his head
Was wreathed with moon-flowers pale as lips of death.
A purple robe he wore, o'erwrought in gold
With the device of a great snake, whose breath
Was like curved flame: which when I did behold
I fell a-weeping, and I cried, 'Sweet youth,
Tell me why, sad and sighing, thou dost rove
These pleasant realms? I pray thee, speak me sooth
What is thy name?' He said, 'My name is Love.'

Then straight the first did turn himself to me
And cried: 'He lieth, for his name is Shame,
But I am Love, and I was wont to be
Alone in this fair garden, till he came
Unasked by night; I am true Love, I fill
The hearts of boy and girl with mutual flame.
Then sighing, said the other: 'Have thy will,
I am the love that dare not speak its name.'

1892 1894

GENDER AND THE IMPERIAL PROJECT

BRITISH AND FOREIGN SCHOOL SOCIETY

The British and Foreign School Society was a key sponsor of secular schools both in England and throughout the empire. The original goal of these schools was to enable poor children to read the Bible. The supposed oppression of Indigenous women by Indigenous men constituted an important defense of empire throughout the nineteenth century.

Appeal in Behalf of the Native Females of British India

From a Circular lately issued, we extract an appalling representation of the State of Female Society in India.

> It is a most painful fact, that there are, in Hindoostan, THIRTY MILLIONS OF FEMALES committed to the care of Great Britain, who are totally destitute of Education, and to whom every vestige of mental cultivation has been denied.
>
> The writings, which have hitherto formed the basis of legislation in that country, have prohibited to them the knowledge of their Sacred Books, and have doomed them to a state of mental subjection. The calamity the most dreaded there, WIDOWHOOD, is, by the jealousy of the other sex, suspended as a judgment of Providence over the Female who shall dare to acquire a knowledge of the alphabet. Menu, one of the Hindoo Legislators, says, "Women have no business with the Veda:[1] thus is the law fully settled. Having therefore no knowledge of expiating texts, sinful women"—meaning all women—"must be as foul as falsehood itself: and this is a fixed rule." Here the legislator first binds the sex fast in the chains of ignorance, and then reproaches and punishes them for the result of his own law!
>
> The dreadful consequences of such laws, and such a state of feeling toward the sex, are most strikingly exhibited in the present state of Female Society in India. Here is a whole empire, comprising so many Millions of Females, in which a single School for Girls has not existed for thousands of years. The Females have never seen a book, except in the hands of men; and have no knowledge of any one of the mental employments of females in a civilized country. Their fingers

have never touched a needle, a pair of scissors, a book, or a pen; and they are entirely excluded from all intellectual intercourse with the other sex. "A woman is not allowed by law to go out of the house without the consent of her husband; to talk with a stranger, nor to laugh without a veil on her face, nor to stand at the door, nor look out at the window."[2] (See Ward on the Hindoos, Vol. I. p. 812.) What can be expected, but that, in such a state of ignorance, the Female Character will be awfully debased? Hence, among the Rajpoot[3] Mothers, the murder of female infants is universally practised—not one survives. Mothers among other castes, in fulfilment of a vow to obtain offspring, are seen sacrificing their first child in the Brahmapootra,[4] and other sacred rivers. Many females drown themselves. A British Officer saw, one morning, while sitting at his own window at Allahabad,[5] sixteen females, under the influence of superstition, drown themselves at the junction of the Jumna and the Ganges: and there are now in London, copies of official documents, which prove, that, in the year 1817, under the Presidency of Bengal, not less than 705 Females, British Subjects, voluntarily immolated themselves,[6] by being burnt or buried alive with the dead bodies of their husbands!

No parallel case of such direful effects of ignorance appears to exist in human history. Never, in the most savage state, have fires like these been kindled, or similar graves been dug. Never were such appalling consequences of ignorance exhibited to the civilized world.

But the great object of the Circular is thus introduced—

Next to the wise and gradual interposition and influence of a benevolent Government, FEMALE EDUCATION forms the most probable and effectual means of putting an end to this deplorable state of Female Society.

In pursuit of this object, it is proposed to send to India, a Female, well qualified to superintend a School for training Native Female Teachers, who should be selected from the daughters of our countrymen in India, already acquainted with the native languages; in order, that, after proper instruction, they may be fixed, as Schoolmistresses, in suitable stations. A Fund is opened by the Committee of the British and Foreign School Society,[7] for providing for the outfit, passage, and support of such a Female; who is to be placed at the disposal and under the direction of the Calcutta School Society.

A Female of superior qualifications, agreeable manners, benevolent temper, and unfeigned piety, could not engage in an object of this nature, without becoming, under the Divine Blessing, an instrument of much ultimate good in India; and the support of such an object by an exclusive Fund at home, would tend to increase the interest which Females in particular should take therein.

1820

Endnotes

- Note 1: Collection of poems or hymns composed in archaic Sanskrit.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: William Ward, *A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos, Including a Minute Description of Their Manners and Customs, and Translations from Their Principal Works* (1817).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A Hindu member of the military caste.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A river in northeast India.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A city in the Indian province of Uttar Pradesh.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A reference to the practice of *sati*, or the voluntary suicide of widows on the funeral pyre of their husbands. Sati figured prominently in British defenses of empire as an example

of supposed barbarism which justified imperial intervention.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: A key sponsor of secular schools modeled on the work of Joseph Lancaster (1778–1838).Return to reference 7

HARRIET MARTINEAU

Harriet Martineau (1802–1876) was an important political economist and vocal abolitionist, and is often credited with being the first sociologist. *Eastern Life* describes her travels through Egypt, Palestine, and Syria. Descriptions of harems were particularly fascinating to British readers for their exotic qualities and for the corrupt sensualism they were understood to display.

From Eastern Life, Present and Past

FROM THE HAREEM

I shall say but little of what I know. If there were the slightest chance of doing any good, I would speak out at all hazards;—I would meet all the danger, and endure all the disgust. But there is no reaching the minds of any who live under the accursed system. It is a system which belongs to a totally different region of ideas from ours: and there is nothing to appeal to in the minds of those who, knowing the facts of the institution, can endure it: and at home, no one needs appealing to and convincing. Any plea for liberality that we meet at home proceeds from some poetical fancy, or some laudable desire for impartiality in the absence of knowledge of the facts. Such pleas are not operative enough to render it worth while to shock and sadden many hearts by statements which no one should be required needlessly to endure. I will tell only something of what I saw; and but little of what I thought and know.

At ten o'clock, one morning, Mrs. Y. and I were home from our early ride, and dressed for our visit to a hareem of a high order. The lady to whose kindness we mainly owed this opportunity, accompanied us, with her daughter. We had a disagreeable drive in the carriage belonging to the hotel, knocking against asses,[1] horses and people all the way. We alighted at the entrance of a paved passage leading to a court which we crossed: and then, in a second court, we were before the entrance of the hareem.

A party of eunuchs stood before a faded curtain, which they held aside when the gentlemen of our party and the dragoman[2] had gone forward. Retired some way behind the curtain stood, in a half circle, eight or ten slave girls, in an attitude of deep obeisance. Two of them then took charge of each of us, holding us by the arms above the elbows, to help us upstairs. * * *

On cushions on the floor lay the chief lady, ill and miserable-looking. She rose as we entered; but we made her lie down again: and she was then covered with a silk counterpane. Her dress was, as we saw when she rose, loose trowsers of blue striped cotton under her black silk jacket: and the same blue cotton appeared at the wrists, under her black sleeves. Her headdress was of black net, bunched out curiously behind. Her hair was braided down the sides of this headdress behind, and the ends were pinned over her forehead. Some of the black net was brought round her face, and under the chin, showing the outline of a face which had no beauty in it, nor traces of former beauty, but which was interesting to-day from her manifest illness and unhappiness. There was a strong expression of waywardness and peevishness about the mouth, however. She wore two handsome diamond rings; and she and one other lady had watches and gold chains. She complained of her head; and her left hand was bound up: she made signs by pressing her bosom, and imitating the dandling of a baby, which, with her occasional tears, persuaded my companions that she had met with some accident and had lost her infant. On leaving the hareem, we found that it was not a child of her own that she was mourning, but that of a white girl in the hareem: and that the wife's illness was wholly from grief for the loss of this baby;—a curious illustration of the feelings and manners of the place! The children born in large hareems are extremely few: and they are usually idolised, and sometimes murdered. It is known that in the houses at home which morally most resemble these hareems (though little enough externally) when the rare event of the birth of a child happens, a passionate joy extends over the wretched household:—jars are quieted, drunkenness is moderated, and there is no self-denial which the poor creatures will not undergo during this gratification of their feminine instincts. They will nurse the child all night in illness, and pamper it all day with sweetmeats and toys; they will fight for the possession of it, and be almost heartbroken at its loss: and lose it they must; for the child always dies,—killed with kindness, even if born healthy. This natural outbreak of feminine instinct takes place in the too populous hareem, when a child is given to any one of the

many who are longing for the gift: and if it dies naturally, it is mourned as we saw through a wonderful conquest of personal jealousy by this general instinct. But when the jealousy is uppermost,—what happens then?—why, the strangling the innocent in its sleep,—or the letting it slip from the window into the river below,—or the mixing poison with its food;—the mother and the murderess, always rivals and now fiends, being shut up together for life. If the child lives, what then? If a girl, she sees before her from the beginning the nothingness of external life, and the chaos of interior existence, in which she is to dwell for life. If a boy, he remains among the women till ten years old, seeing things when the eunuchs come in to romp, and hearing things among the chatter of the ignorant women which brutalise him for life before the age of rationality comes. But I will not dwell on these hopeless miseries.

A sensible looking old lady, who had lost an eye, sat at the head of the invalid: and a nun-like elderly woman, whose head and throat were wrapped in unstarched muslin, sat behind for a time, and then went away, after an affectionate salutation to the invalid.—Towards the end of the visit, the husband's mother came in,—looking like a little old man in her coat trimmed with fur. Her countenance was cheerful and pleasant. We saw, I think, about twenty more women, —some slaves,—most or all young—some good-looking, but none handsome. Some few were black; and the rest very light:—Nubians or Abyssinians and Circassians,[3] no doubt. One of the best figures, as a picture, in the hareem, was a Nubian girl, in an amber-coloured watered silk, embroidered with black, looped up in festoons, and finished with a black boddice. The richness of the gay printed cotton skirts and sleeves surprised us: the finest shawls could hardly have looked better. One graceful girl had her pretty figure well shown by a tight-fitting black dress. Their heads were dressed much like the chief lady's. Two, who must have been sisters, if not twins, had patches between the eyes. One handmaid was barefoot, and several were without shoes. Though there were none of the whole large number who could be called particularly pretty individually, the scene was, on the whole, exceedingly striking, as the realisation of what

one knew before, but as in a dream. The girls went out and came in, but, for the most part, stood in a half circle. Two sat on their heels for a time: and some went to play in the neighbouring apartments.

Coffee was handed to us twice, with all the well-known apparatus of jewelled cups, embroidered tray cover, and gold-flowered napkins. There were chi bouques,[4] of course: and sherbets in cut glass cups. The time was passed in attempts to have conversation by signs; attempts which are fruitless among people of the different ideas which belong to different races. How much they made out about us, we do not know: but they inquired into the mutual relationships of the party, and put the extraordinary questions which are always put to ladies who visit the hareems.—A young lady of my acquaintance, of the age of eighteen, but looking younger, went with her mother to a hareem in Cairo (not the one I have been describing) and excited great amazement when obliged to confess that she had not either children or a husband. One of the wives threw her arms about her, intreated her to stay for ever, said she should have any husband she liked, but particularly recommended her own, saying that she was sure he would soon wish for another wife, and she had so much rather it should be my young friend, who would amuse her continually, than anybody else that she could not be so fond of. Everywhere they pitied us European women heartily, that we had to go about travelling, and appearing in the streets without being properly taken care of,—that is watched. They think us strangely neglected in being left so free, and boast of their spy system and imprisonment as tokens of the value in which they are held.

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The difficulty is to get away, when one is visiting a hareem. The poor ladies cannot conceive of one's having anything to do; and the only reason they can understand for the interview coming to an end is the arrival of sunset, after which it would, they think, be improper for any woman to be abroad. And the amusement to them of such a visit is so great that they protract it to the utmost, even in such a

case as ours to-day, when all intercourse was conducted by dumb show. It is certainly very tiresome; and the only wonder is that the hostesses can like it. To sit hour after hour on the deewán,[5] without any exchange of ideas, having our clothes examined, and being plied with successive cups of coffee and sherbet, and pipes, and being gazed at by a half-circle of girls in brocade and shawls, and made to sit down again as soon as one attempts to rise, is as wearisome an experience as one meets with in foreign lands.—The weariness of heart is, however, the worst part of it. I noted all the faces well during our constrained stay; and I saw no trace of mind in any one except in the homely one-eyed old lady. All the younger ones were dull, soulless, brutish, or peevish. How should it be otherwise, when the only idea of their whole lives is that which, with all our interests and engagements, we consider too prominent with us? There cannot be a woman of them all who is not dwarfed and withered in mind and soul by being kept wholly engrossed with that one interest,—detained at that stage in existence which, though most important in its place, is so as a means to ulterior ends. The ignorance is fearful enough; but the grossness is revolting.

1848

Endnotes

- Note 1: Donkeys.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Interpreter; “eunuchs”: castrated men.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A nation and ethnic group indigenous to the North Caucasus region; “Nubians”: an ethnolinguistic group indigenous to Egypt; “Abyssinians”: a population indigenous to the Horn of Africa.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Turkish pipes.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Backless sofa or couch.Return to reference 5

CHARLES DARWIN

Charles Darwin's life and work is discussed at length elsewhere in this volume. This passage is included here to provide some sense of the disgust often directed at Indigenous peoples, and particularly Indigenous women. Despite Darwin's sympathy for their plight, the horror he feels toward their way of life is clearly manifest.

From Journal of Researches

WRETCHED STATE OF THE NATIVES

On the east coast the natives, as we have seen, have guanaco[1] cloaks, and on the west, they possess seal-skins. Amongst these central tribes the men generally have an otter-skin, or some small scrap about as large as a pocket-handkerchief, which is barely sufficient to cover their backs as low down as their loins. It is laced across the breast by strings, and according as the wind blows, it is shifted from side to side. But these Fuegians[2] in the canoe were quite naked, and even one full-grown woman was absolutely so. It was raining heavily, and the fresh water, together with the spray, trickled down her body. In another harbour not far distant, a woman, who was suckling a recently-born child, came one day alongside the vessel, and remained there out of mere curiosity, whilst the sleet fell and thawed on her naked bosom, and on the skin of her naked baby! These poor wretches were stunted in their growth, their hideous faces bedaubed with white paint, their skins filthy and greasy, their hair entangled, their voices discordant, and their gestures violent. Viewing such men, one can hardly make oneself believe that they are fellow-creatures, and inhabitants of the same world. It is a common subject of conjecture what pleasure in life some of the lower animals can enjoy: how much more reasonably the same question may be asked with respect to these barbarians!

1852

Endnotes

- Note 1: Llama-like animals native to the mountainous regions of South America.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: The Indigenous peoples of Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of South America.Return to reference 2

FRIEDRICH ENGELS
1820–1895

The decision to include in this volume a portion of Engels's *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (Ger. 1845, Eng. 1887) is anomalous in several respects. First, although he spent long periods living in England, he was born and raised in what was then Prussia and is now part of Germany. Second, he did not write in English, and the work reproduced here was not translated into English until relatively late in the nineteenth century. Even then, according to some historians, it was not especially influential in England until well into the twentieth century. Finally, Engels is not primarily regarded as a literary figure: his life's work (much of which involved collaborations with Karl Marx) was instead resolutely and consistently political. His claim to be included in this anthology, then, lies in the power of his descriptions of industrial England and the conditions of English workers. Written while representing his wealthy family's interests in Manchester, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* provides a detailed and passionate record of living and working conditions in that city. But it also offers a compelling account of how seemingly random decisions made by independent actors can conspire to create structures of oppression and exploitation. The decision to place commercial buildings on well-trafficked streets might seem commonsensical, for example, but those storefronts also serve to hide from middle-class view the unsanitary, and inhumane living conditions of workers and their

families. Many writers were concerned with the plight of British workers: Elizabeth Gaskell, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Charles Dickens, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti are only a few of the authors who appear in this collection. But few described the material conditions of their lives in such unsentimental and damning detail.

Engels was born in 1820 in Barmen, Westphalia, the eldest son of a wealthy textile manufacturing family. Apparently destined to take his father's place as the head of the family firm, Engels instead embraced atheism and political radicalism early on. In 1842, his father sent him to England to work in the family's Manchester firm. Engels instead used his two-year-long trip to study the living and working conditions in what was at that time the world's most fully industrialized city—as well as to consider how those conditions might lead to the overthrow of the economic and political systems that had made them possible. The result was a series of articles that served as the basis of *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. By the time Engels returned to Germany in 1844, he had become a close friend and collaborator of political theorist and revolutionary Karl Marx. Together, the two men wrote *German Ideology* (1845–46) and *The Communist Manifesto* (1847). Engels also supported Marx financially for much of his life, and his family after his death. Although sometimes cast as merely Marx's secretary or assistant, Engels was a forceful thinker in his own right: the sole author of the first draft of *The Communist Manifesto*, and the source of at least some of Marx's early formulations of socialism. He was the author of several additional texts—including *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (1880) and *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884).

Despite his revolutionary commitments, Engels lived a strangely double life, particularly in his later years. From 1850 to 1869, he worked first as an employee and then as a partner for the family firm. In that later capacity, in particular, he participated in the ordinary activities of the bourgeois elite: hunting and patronizing the social and intellectual clubs of the city. Throughout this period, he also maintained a secret household with Mary Burns, an Irish laborer

he met working in his family's Manchester mill. The two never married as a result of their opposition to the oppressive nature of marriage. But Mary was also never admitted into Engels's social life. After Mary's death in 1863, he became romantically involved with her sister, Lizzie Burns. Engels died of throat cancer in 1895.

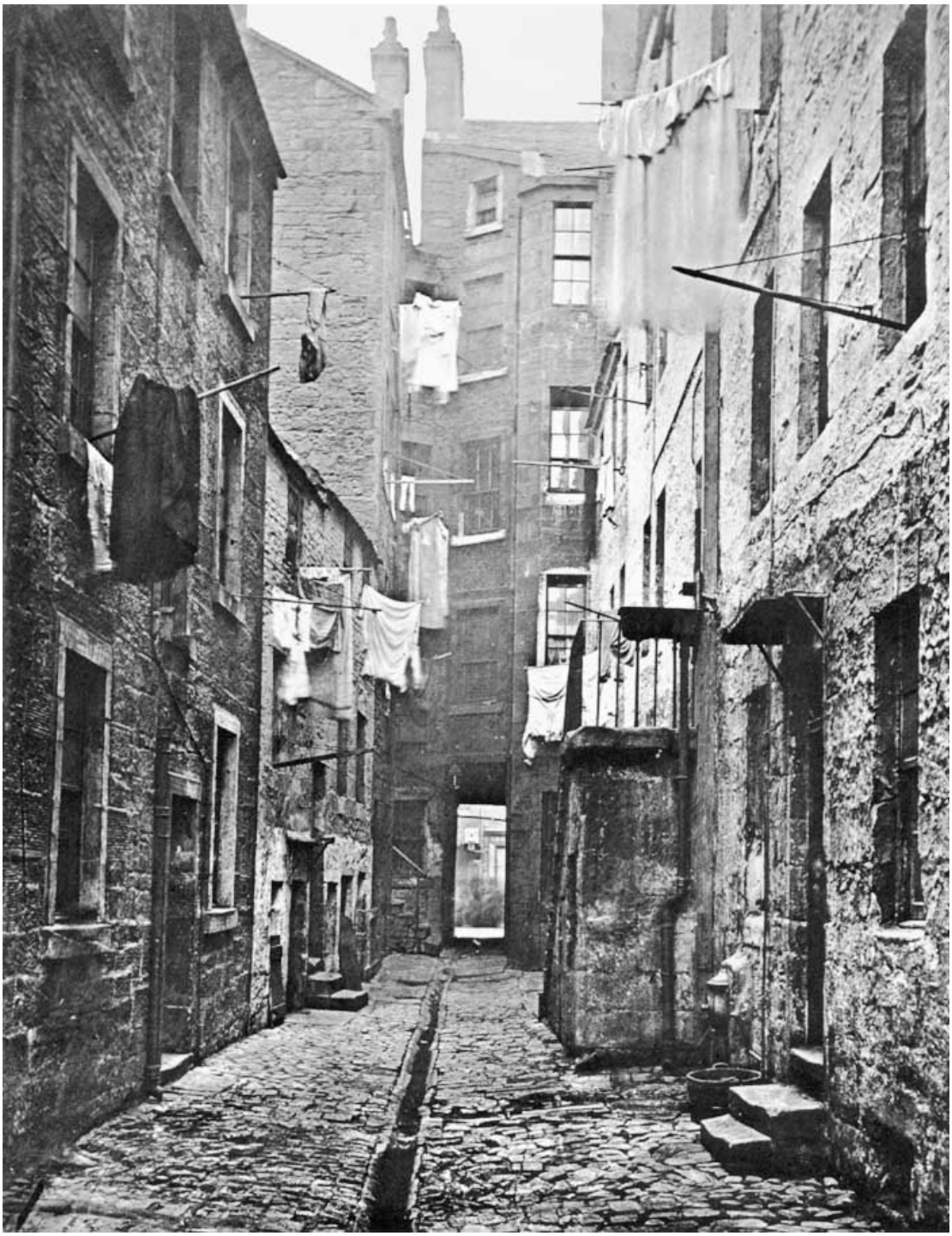
From The Condition of the Working Class in England

The Great Towns

A town, such as London, where a man may wander for hours together without reaching the beginning of the end, without meeting the slightest hint which could lead to the inference that there is open country within reach, is a strange thing. This colossal centralisation, this heaping together of two and a half millions of human beings at one point, has multiplied the power of this two and a half millions a hundredfold; has raised London to the commercial capital of the world, created the giant docks and assembled the thousand vessels that continually cover the Thames. I know nothing more imposing than the view which the Thames offers during the ascent from the sea to London Bridge. The masses of buildings, the wharves on both sides, especially from Woolwich upwards, the countless ships along both shores, crowding ever closer and closer together, until, at last, only a narrow passage remains in the middle of the river, a passage through which hundreds of steamers shoot by one another; all this is so vast, so impressive, that a man cannot collect himself, but is lost in the marvel of England's greatness before he sets foot upon English soil.

But the sacrifices which all this has cost become apparent later. After roaming the streets of the capital a day or two, making headway with difficulty through the human turmoil and the endless lines of vehicles, after visiting the slums of the metropolis, one realises for the first time that these Londoners have been forced to sacrifice the best qualities of their human nature, to bring to pass all the marvels of civilisation which crowd their city; that a hundred powers which slumbered within them have remained inactive, have been suppressed in order that a few might be developed more fully and multiply through union with those of others. The very turmoil of

the streets has something repulsive, something against which human nature rebels. The hundreds of thousands of all classes and ranks crowding past each other, are they not all human beings with the same qualities and powers, and with the same interest in being happy? And have they not, in the end, to seek happiness in the same way, by the same means? And still they crowd by one another as though they had nothing in common, nothing to do with one another, and their only agreement is the tacit one, that each keep to his own side of the pavement, so as not to delay the opposing streams of the crowd, while it occurs to no man to honour another with so much as a glance. The brutal indifference, the unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest becomes the more repellent and offensive, the more these individuals are crowded together, within a limited space. And, however much one may be aware that this isolation of the individual, this narrow self-seeking, is the fundamental principle of our society everywhere, it is nowhere so shamelessly barefaced, so self-conscious as just here in the crowding of the great city. The dissolution of mankind into monads, of which each one has a separate principle, and a separate purpose, the world of atoms, is here carried out to its utmost extreme.



Scottish Poverty. Thomas Annan (1829–1887) was one of the first photographers to record the housing conditions of the poor. This image of Scottish poverty in the late 1860s ("Close, No. 75 High Street") appeared in his book *The Old Closes and Streets of Glasgow* (1877).

Hence it comes, too, that the social war, the war of each against all, is here openly declared. Just as in Stirner's recent book,[1] people regard each other only as useful objects; each exploits the other, and the end of it all is, that the stronger treads the weaker under foot, and that the powerful few, the capitalists, seize everything for themselves, while to the weak many, the poor, scarcely a bare existence remains.

What is true of London, is true of Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, is true of all great towns. Everywhere barbarous indifference, hard egotism on one hand, and nameless misery on the other, everywhere social warfare, every man's house in a state of siege, everywhere reciprocal plundering under the protection of the law, and all so shameless, so openly avowed that one shrinks before the consequences of our social state as they manifest themselves here undisguised, and can only wonder that the whole crazy fabric still hangs together.

Since capital, the direct or indirect control of the means of subsistence and production, is the weapon with which this social warfare is carried on, it is clear that all the disadvantages of such a state must fall upon the poor. For him no one has the slightest concern. Cast into the whirlpool, he must struggle through as well as he can. If he is so happy as to find work, i.e. if the bourgeoisie does him the favour to enrich itself by means of him, wages await him which scarcely suffice to keep body and soul together; if he can get no work he may steal, if he is not afraid of the police, or starve, in which case the police will take care that he does so in a quiet and inoffensive manner. During my residence in England, at least twenty or thirty persons have died of simple starvation under the most revolting circumstances, and a jury has rarely been found possessed of the courage to speak the plain truth in the matter. Let the testimony of the witnesses be never so clear and unequivocal, the bourgeoisie, from which the jury is selected, always finds some backdoor through which to escape the frightful verdict, death from starvation. The bourgeoisie dare not speak the truth in these cases, for it would speak its own condemnation. But indirectly, far more

than directly, many have died of starvation, where long continued want of proper nourishment has called forth fatal illness, when it has produced such debility that causes which might otherwise have remained inoperative brought on severe illness and death. The English working-men call this "social murder," and accuse our whole society of perpetrating this crime perpetually. Are they wrong?

True, it is only individuals who starve, but what security has the working-man that it may not be his turn tomorrow? Who assures him employment, who vouches for it that, if for any reason or no reason his lord and master discharges him to-morrow, he can struggle along with those dependent upon him, until he may find some one else "to give him bread"? Who guarantees that willingness to work shall suffice to obtain work, that uprightness, industry, thrift, and the rest of the virtues recommended by the bourgeoisie, are really his road to happiness? No one. He knows that he has something to-day, and that it does not depend upon himself whether he shall have something to-morrow. He knows that every breeze that blows, every whim of his employer, every bad turn of trade may hurl him back into the fierce whirlpool from which he has temporarily saved himself, and in which it is hard and often impossible to keep his head above water. He knows that, though he may have the means of living to-day, it is very uncertain whether he shall to-morrow.

Meanwhile, let us proceed to a more detailed investigation of the position, in which the social war has placed the non-possessing class. Let us see what pay for his work society gives the working-man in the form of dwelling, clothing, food, what sort of subsistence it grants those who contribute most to the maintenance of society; and, first, let us consider the dwellings.

Every great city has one or more slums, where the working-class is crowded together. True, poverty often dwells in hidden alleys close to the palaces of the rich; but, in general, a separate territory has been assigned to it, where, removed from the sight of the happier classes, it may struggle along as it can. These slums are pretty equally arranged in all the great towns of England, the worst houses in the worst quarters of the towns; usually one or two-storied

cottages in long rows, perhaps with cellars used as dwellings, almost always irregularly built. These houses of three or four rooms and a kitchen form, throughout England, some parts of London excepted, the general dwellings of the working-class. The streets are generally unpaved, rough, dirty, filled with vegetable and animal refuse, without sewers or gutters, but supplied with foul, stagnant pools instead. Moreover, ventilation is impeded by the bad, confused method of building of the whole quarter, and since many human beings here live crowded into a small space, the atmosphere that prevails in these working-men's quarters may readily be imagined. Further, the streets serve as drying grounds in fine weather; lines are stretched across from house to house, and hung with wet clothing.

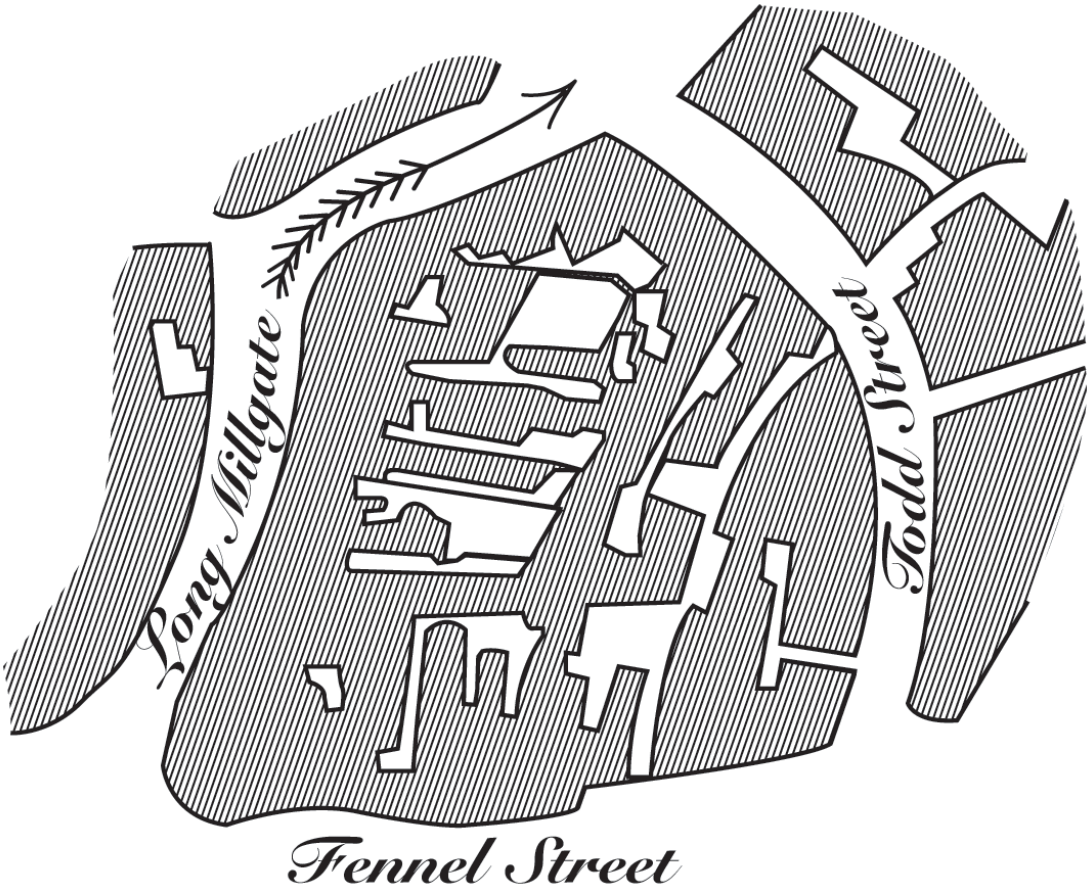
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Manchester lies at the foot of the southern slope of a range of hills, which stretch hither from Oldham, their last peak, Kersallmoor, being at once the racecourse and the Mons Sacer of Manchester. Manchester proper lies on the left bank of the Irwell, between that stream and the two smaller ones, the Irk and the Medlock, which here empty into the Irwell. On the right bank of the Irwell, bounded by a sharp curve of the river, lies Salford, and farther westward Pendleton; northward from the Irwell lie Upper and Lower Broughton; northward of the Irk, Cheetham Hill; south of the Medlock lies Hulme; farther east Chorlton on Medlock; still farther, pretty well to the east of Manchester, Ardwick. The whole assemblage of buildings is commonly called Manchester, and contains about four hundred thousand inhabitants, rather more than less. The town itself is peculiarly built, so that a person may live in it for years, and go in and out daily without coming into contact with a working-people's quarter or even with workers, that is, so long as he confines himself to his business or to pleasure walks. This arises chiefly from the fact, that by unconscious tacit agreement, as well as with outspoken conscious determination, the working-people's quarters are sharply separated from the sections of the city reserved for the middle-class; or, if this does not succeed, they are concealed with

the cloak of charity. Manchester contains, at its heart, a rather extended commercial district, perhaps half a mile long and about as broad, and consisting almost wholly of offices and warehouses. Nearly the whole district is abandoned by dwellers, and is lonely and deserted at night; only watchmen and policemen traverse its narrow lanes with their dark lanterns. This district is cut through by certain main thoroughfares upon which the vast traffic concentrates, and in which the ground level is lined with brilliant shops. In these streets the upper floors are occupied, here and there, and there is a good deal of life upon them until late at night. With the exception of this commercial district, all Manchester proper, all Salford and Hulme, a great part of Pendleton and Chorlton, two-thirds of Ardwick, and single stretches of Cheetham Hill and Broughton are all unmixed working-people's quarters, stretching like a girdle, averaging a mile and a half in breadth, around the commercial district. Outside, beyond this girdle, lives the upper and middle bourgeoisie, the middle bourgeoisie in regularly laid out streets in the vicinity of the working quarters, especially in Chorlton and the lower lying portions of Cheetham Hill; the upper bourgeoisie in remoter villas with gardens in Chorlton and Ardwick, or on the breezy heights of Cheetham Hill, Broughton, and Pendleton, in free, wholesome country air, in fine, comfortable homes, passed once every half or quarter hour by omnibuses going into the city. And the finest part of the arrangements is this, that the members of this money aristocracy can take the shortest road through the middle of all the labouring districts to their places of business, without ever seeing that they are in the midst of the grimy misery that lurks to the right and the left. For the thoroughfares leading from the Exchange in all directions out of the city are lined, on both sides, with an almost unbroken series of shops, and are so kept in the hands of the middle and lower bourgeoisie, which, out of self-interest, cares for a decent and cleanly external appearance and *can* care for it. True, these shops bear some relation to the districts which lie behind them, and are more elegant in the commercial and residential quarters than when they hide grimy working-men's dwellings; but they suffice to conceal from the eyes of the wealthy men and women of strong stomachs

and weak nerves the misery and grime which form the complement to their wealth. So, for instance, Deansgate, which leads from the Old Church directly southward, is lined first with mills and warehouses, then with second-rate shops and alehouses; farther south, when it leaves the commercial district, with less inviting shops, which grow dirtier and more interrupted by beerhouses and gin palaces the farther one goes, until at the southern end the appearance of the shops leaves no doubt that workers and workers only are their customers. So Market Street running south-east from the Exchange; at first brilliant shops of the best sort, with counting-houses or warehouses above; in the continuation, Piccadilly, immense hotels and warehouses; in the farther continuation, London Road, in the neighbourhood of the Medlock, factories, beerhouses, shops for the humbler bourgeoisie and the working population; and from this point onward, large gardens and villas of the wealthier merchants and manufacturers. In this way anyone who knows Manchester can infer the adjoining districts, from the appearance of the thoroughfare, but one is seldom in a position to catch from the street a glimpse of the real labouring districts. I know very well that this hypocritical plan is more or less common to all great cities; I know, too, that the retail dealers are forced by the nature of their business to take possession of the great highways; I know that there are more good buildings than bad ones upon such streets everywhere, and that the value of land is greater near them than in remoter districts; but at the same time I have never seen so systematic a shutting out of the working-class from the thoroughfares, so tender a concealment of everything which might affront the eye and the nerves of the bourgeoisie, as in Manchester. And yet, in other respects, Manchester is less built according to a plan, after official regulations, is more an outgrowth of accident, than any other city; and when I consider in this connection the eager assurances of the middle class, that the working class is doing famously, I cannot help feeling that the liberal manufacturers, the big-wigs of Manchester, are not so innocent after all, in the matter of this sensitive method of construction.

I may mention just here that the mills almost all adjoin the rivers or the different canals that ramify throughout the city, before I proceed at once to describe the labouring quarters. First of all, there is the Old Town of Manchester, which lies between the northern boundary of the commercial district and the Irk. Here the streets, even the better ones, are narrow and winding, like Todd Street, Long Millgate, Withy Grove, and Shude Hill, the houses dirty, old, and tumble-down, and the construction of the side streets utterly horrible. Going from the Old Church to Long Millgate, the stroller has at once a row of old-fashioned houses on the right, of which not one has kept its original level; these are remnants of the old pre-manufacturing Manchester, whose former inhabitants have removed with their descendants into better-built districts, and have left the houses, which were not good enough for them, to a working-class population strongly mixed with Irish blood. Here one is in an almost undisguised working-men's quarter, for even the shops and beerhouses hardly take the trouble to exhibit a trifling degree of cleanliness. But all this is nothing in comparison with the courts and lanes which lie behind, to which access can be gained only through covered passages, in which no two human beings can pass at the same time. Of the irregular cramming together of dwellings in ways which defy all rational plan, of the tangle in which they are crowded literally one upon the other, it is impossible to convey an idea. And it is not the buildings surviving from the old times of Manchester which are to blame for this; the confusion has only recently reached its height when every scrap of space left by the old way of building has been filled up and patched over until not a foot of land is left to be further occupied.



To confirm my statement I have drawn here a small section of the plan of Manchester—not the worst spot and not one-tenth of the whole Old Town.

This drawing will suffice to characterise the irrational manner in which the entire district was built, particularly the part near the Irk.

The south bank of the Irk is here very steep and between fifteen and thirty feet high. On this declivitous hillside there are planted three rows of houses, of which the lowest rise directly out of the river, while the front walls of the highest stand on the crest of the hill in Long Millgate. Among them are mills on the river, in short, the method of construction is as crowded and disorderly here as in the lower part of Long Millgate. Right and left a multitude of covered passages lead from the main street into numerous courts, and he who turns in thither gets into filth and disgusting grime, the equal of which is not to be found—especially in the courts which lead down to

the Irk, and which contain unqualifiedly the most horrible dwellings which I have yet beheld. In one of these courts there stands directly at the entrance, at the end of the covered passage, a privy without a door, so dirty that the inhabitants can pass into and out of the court only by passing through foul pools of stagnant urine and excrement. This is the first court on the Irk above Ducie Bridge—in case any one should care to look into it. Below it on the river there are several tanneries which fill the whole neighbourhood with the stench of animal putrefaction. Below Ducie Bridge the only entrance to most of the houses is by means of narrow, dirty stairs and over heaps of refuse and filth. The first court below Ducie Bridge, known as Allen's Court, was in such a state at the time of the cholera that the sanitary police ordered it evacuated, swept, and disinfected with chloride of lime. Dr Kay gives a terrible description of the state of this court at the time.[2] Since then, it seems to have been partially torn away and rebuilt; at least looking down from Ducie Bridge, the passer-by sees several ruined walls and heaps of *débris* with some newer houses. The view from this bridge, mercifully concealed from mortals of small stature by a parapet as high as a man, is characteristic for the whole district. At the bottom flows, or rather stagnates, the Irk, a narrow, coal-black, foul-smelling stream, full of débris and refuse, which it deposits on the shallower right bank. In dry weather, a long string of the most disgusting, blackish-green, slime pools are left standing on this bank, from the depths of which bubbles of miasmatic gas constantly arise and give forth a stench unendurable even on the bridge forty or fifty feet above the surface of the stream. But besides this, the stream itself is checked every few paces by high weirs,[3] behind which slime and refuse accumulate and rot in thick masses. Above the bridge are tanneries, bonemills, and gasworks, from which all drains and refuse find their way into the Irk, which receives further the contents of all the neighbouring sewers and privies. It may be easily imagined, therefore, what sort of residue the stream deposits. Below the bridge you look upon the piles of *débris*, the refuse, filth, and offal from the courts on the steep left bank; here each house is packed close behind its neighbour and a piece of each

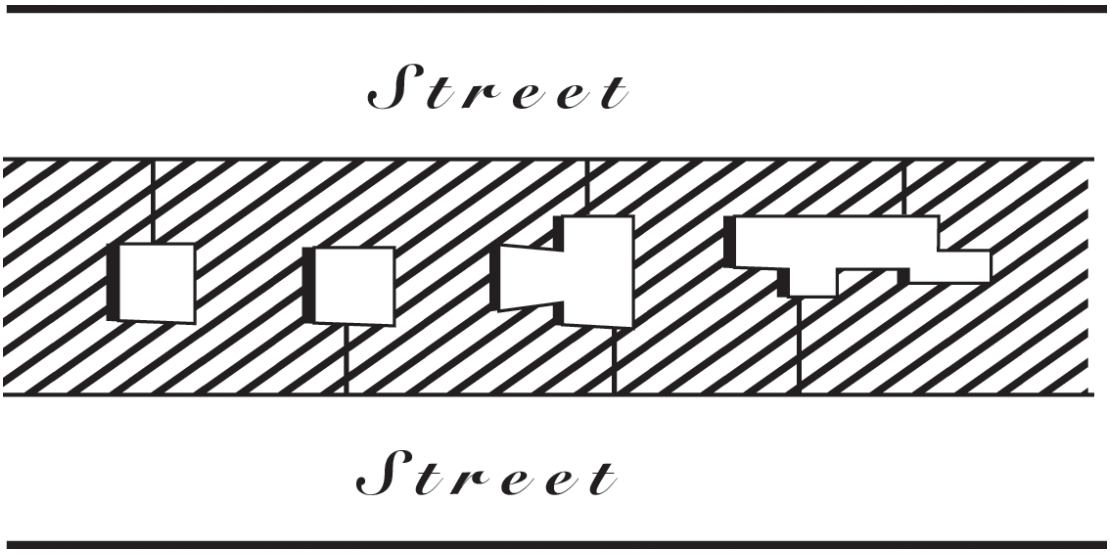
is visible, all black, smoky, crumbling, ancient, with broken panes and window-frames. The background is furnished by old barrack-like factory buildings. On the lower right bank stands a long row of houses and mills; the second house being a ruin without a roof, piled with *débris*; the third stands so low that the lowest floor is uninhabitable, and therefore without windows or doors. Here the background embraces the pauper burial-ground, the station of the Liverpool and Leeds railway, and, in the rear of this, the Workhouse, the "Poor-Law Bastille" [4] of Manchester, which, like a citadel, looks threateningly down from behind its high walls and parapets on the hilltop, upon the working-people's quarter below.

Above Ducie Bridge, the left bank grows more flat and the right bank steeper, but the condition of the dwellings on both banks grows worse rather than better. He who turns to the left here from the main street, Long Millgate, is lost; he wanders from one court to another, turns countless corners, passes nothing but narrow, filthy nooks and alleys, until after a few minutes he has lost all clue, and knows not whither to turn. Everywhere half or wholly ruined buildings, some of them actually uninhabited, which means a great deal here; rarely a wooden or stone floor to be seen in the houses, almost uniformly broken, ill-fitting windows and doors, and a state of filth! Everywhere heaps of *débris*, refuse, and offal; standing pools for gutters, and a stench which alone would make it impossible for a human being in any degree civilised to live in such a district. The newly-built extension of the Leeds railway, which crosses the Irk here, has swept away some of these courts and lanes, laying others completely open to view. Immediately under the railway bridge there stands a court, the filth and horrors of which surpass all the others by far, just because it was hitherto so shut off, so secluded that the way to it could not be found without a good deal of trouble. I should never have discovered it myself, without the breaks made by the railway, though I thought I knew this whole region thoroughly. Passing along a rough bank, among stakes and washing-lines, one penetrates into this chaos of small one-storied, one-roomed huts, in most of which there is no artificial floor; kitchen, living and sleeping-

room all in one. In such a hole, scarcely five feet long by six broad, I found two beds—and such bedsteads and beds!—which, with a staircase and chimney-place, exactly filled the room. In several others I found absolutely nothing, while the door stood open, and the inhabitants leaned against it. Everywhere before the doors refuse and offal; that any sort of pavement lay underneath could not be seen but only felt, here and there, with the feet. This whole collection of cattle-sheds for human beings was surrounded on two sides by houses and a factory, and on the third by the river, and besides the narrow stair up the bank, a narrow doorway alone led out into another almost equally ill-built, ill-kept labyrinth of dwellings.

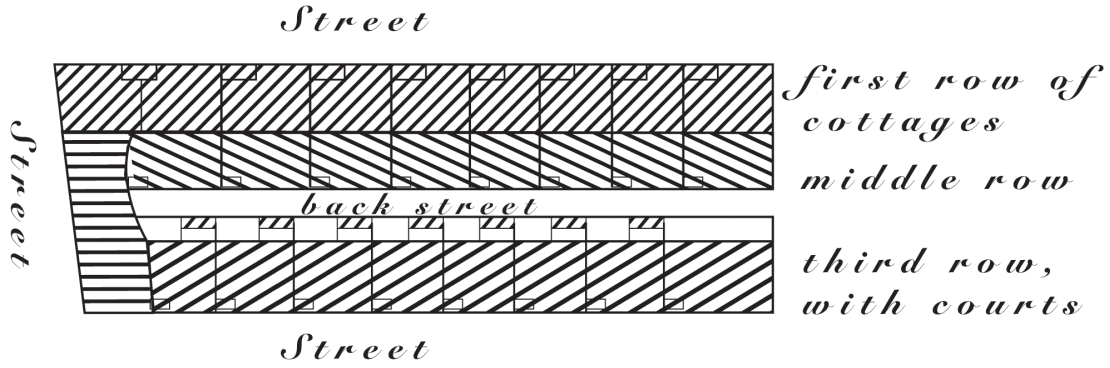
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It may not be out of place to make some general observations here just as to the customary construction of working men's quarters in Manchester. We have seen how in the Old Town pure accident determined the grouping of the houses in general. Every house is built without reference to any other, and the scraps of space between them are called courts for want of another name. In the somewhat newer portions of the same quarter, and in other working-men's quarters, dating from the early days of industrial activity, a somewhat more orderly arrangement may be found. The space between two streets is divided into more regular, usually square courts.



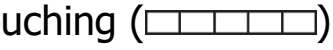
These courts were built in this way from the beginning, and communicate with the streets by means of covered passages. If the totally planless construction is injurious to the health of the workers by preventing ventilation, this method of shutting them up in courts surrounded on all sides by buildings is far more so. The air simply cannot escape; the chimneys of the houses are the sole drains for the imprisoned atmosphere of the courts, and they serve the purpose only so long as fire is kept burning.[5] Moreover, the houses surrounding such courts are usually built back to back, having the rear wall in common; and this alone suffices to prevent any sufficient through ventilation. And, as the police charged with care of the streets does not trouble itself about the condition of these courts, as everything quietly lies where it is thrown, there is no cause for wonder at the filth and heaps of ashes and offal to be found here. I have been in courts, in Millers Street, at least half a foot below the level of the thoroughfare, and without the slightest drainage for the water that accumulates in them in rainy weather! More recently another different method of building was adopted, and has now become general. Working-men’s cottages are almost never built singly, but always by the dozen or score; a single contractor building up one or two streets at a time. These are then arranged as follows: One front is formed of cottages of the best class, so fortunate as to possess a back door and small court, and these command the

highest rent. In the rear of these cottages runs a narrow alley, the back street, built up at both ends, into which either a narrow roadway or a covered passage leads from one side. The cottages which face this back street command least rent, and are most neglected. These have their rear walls in common with the third row of cottages which face a second street, and command less rent than the first row and more than the second. The streets are laid out somewhat in the following manner.



By this method of construction, comparatively good ventilation can be obtained for the first row of cottages, and the third row is no worse off than with the former method. The middle row, on the other hand, is at least as badly ventilated as the houses in the courts, and the back street is always in the same filthy, disgusting condition as they. The contractors prefer this method because it saves them space, and furnishes the means of fleecing better paid workers through the higher rents of the cottages in the first and third rows. These three different forms of cottage building are found all over Manchester and throughout Lancashire and Yorkshire, often mixed up together, but usually separate enough to indicate the relative age of parts of towns. The third system, that of the back alleys, prevails largely in the great working-men's district east of St George's Road and Ancoats Street, and is the one most often found in the other working-men's quarters of Manchester and its suburbs.

In the last-mentioned broad district, included under the name Ancoats, stand the largest mills of Manchester lining the canals, colossal six and seven-storied buildings towering with their slender

chimneys far above the low cottages of the workers. The population of the district consists, therefore, chiefly of mill-hands, and in the worst streets, of hand-weavers. The streets nearest the heart of the town are the oldest, and consequently the worst; they are, however, paved, and supplied with drains. Among them I include those nearest to and parallel with Oldham Road and Great Ancoats Street. Farther to the north-east lie many newly-built-up streets; here the cottages look neat and cleanly, doors and windows are new and freshly painted, the rooms within newly whitewashed; the streets themselves are better aired, the vacant building lots between them larger and more numerous. But this can be said of a minority of the houses only, while cellar dwellings are to be found under almost every cottage; many streets are unpaved and without sewers; and, worse than all, this neat appearance is all pretence, a pretence which vanishes within the first ten years. For the construction of the cottages individually is no less to be condemned than the plan of the streets. All such cottages look neat and substantial at first; their massive brick walls deceive the eye, and, on passing through a *newly-built* working-men's street, without remembering the back alleys and the construction of the houses themselves, one is inclined to agree with the assertion of the Liberal manufacturers that the working population is nowhere so well housed as in England. But on closer examination, it becomes evident that the walls of these cottages are as thin as it is possible to make them. The outer walls, those of the cellar, which bear the weight of the ground-floor and roof, are one whole brick thick at most, the bricks lying with their long sides touching (); but I have seen many a cottage of the same height, some in process of building, whose outer walls were but one-half brick thick, the bricks lying not sidewise but lengthwise, their narrow ends touching (). The object of this is to spare material, but there is also another reason for it; namely, the fact that the contractors never own the land but lease it, according to the English custom, for twenty, thirty, forty, fifty or ninety-nine years, at the expiration of which time it falls, with everything upon it, back into the possession of the original holder, who pays nothing in return for improvements upon it. The improvements are therefore so

calculated by the lessee as to be worth as little as possible at the expiration of the stipulated term. And as such cottages are often built but twenty or thirty years before the expiration of the term, it may easily be imagined that the contractors make no unnecessary expenditure upon them. Moreover, these contractors, usually carpenters and builders, or manufacturers, spend little or nothing in repairs, partly to avoid diminishing their rent receipts, and partly in view of the approaching surrender of the improvement to the landowner; while in consequence of commercial crises and the loss of work that follows them, whole streets often stand empty, the cottages falling rapidly into ruin and uninhabitableness. It is calculated in general that working-men's cottages last only forty years on the average. This sounds strangely enough when one sees the beautiful, massive walls of newly-built ones, which seem to give promise of lasting a couple of centuries; but the fact remains that the niggardliness of the original expenditure, the neglect of all repairs, the frequent periods of emptiness, the constant change of inhabitants, and the destruction carried on by the dwellers during the final ten years, usually Irish families, who do not hesitate to use the wooden portions for fire-wood—all this, taken together, accomplishes the complete ruin of the cottages by the end of forty years. Hence it comes that Ancoats, built chiefly since the sudden growth of manufacture, chiefly indeed within the present century, contains a vast number of ruinous houses, most of them being, in fact, in the last stages of inhabitableness. I will not dwell upon the amount of capital thus wasted, the small additional expenditure upon the original improvement and upon repairs which would suffice to keep this whole district clean, decent, and inhabitable for years together. I have to deal here with the state of the houses and their inhabitants, and it must be admitted that no more injurious and demoralizing method of housing the workers has yet been discovered than precisely this. The working-man is constrained to occupy such ruinous dwellings because he cannot pay for others, and because there are no others in the vicinity of his mill; perhaps, too, because they belong to the employer, who engages him only on condition of his taking such a cottage. The calculation with reference to the forty

years' duration of the cottage is, of course, not always perfectly strict; for, if the dwellings are in a thickly-built-up portion of the town, and there is a good prospect of finding steady occupants for them, while the ground rent is high, the contractors do a little something to keep the cottages inhabitable after the expiration of the forty years. They never do anything more, however, than is absolutely unavoidable, and the dwellings so repaired are the worst of all. Occasionally when an epidemic threatens, the otherwise sleepy conscience of the sanitary police is a little stirred, raids are made into the working-men's districts, whole rows of cellars and cottages are closed, as happened in the case of several lanes near Oldham Road; but this does not last long: the condemned cottages soon find occupants again, the owners are much better off by letting them, and the sanitary police will not come again so soon. These east and north-east sides of Manchester are the only ones on which the bourgeoisie has not built, because ten or eleven months of the year the west and south-west wind drives the smoke of all the factories hither, and that is for the working-people alone to breathe.

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Endnotes

- Note 1: Max Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own* (1844).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: James Ph. Kay, M.D., *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Class Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester*, 2nd edn, 1832. Dr Kay confuses the working class in general with the factory workers, otherwise an excellent pamphlet [*Engels's note*].Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Enclosures or dams to catch fish or regulate a river's flow.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The New Poor Law (1834) made it illegal for paupers to live outside or beg; instead, the poor were forced into workhouses to labor in exchange for shelter. Conditions were

deliberately harsh to discourage people from claiming relief. The Bastille was a fortress and prison in Paris; it was stormed by revolutionaries on the eve of the French Revolution.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: And yet an English Liberal wiseacre asserts, in the Report of the Children's Employment Commission, that these courts are the masterpiece of municipal architecture, because, like a multitude of little parks, they improve ventilation, the circulation of air! Certainly, if each court had two or four broad open entrances facing each other, through which the air could pour; but they never have two, rarely one, and usually only a narrow covered passage [*Engels's note*].Return to reference 5

From *Single Branches of Industry. Factory-hands*

To form a correct judgement of the influence of factory-work upon the health of the female sex, it is necessary first to consider the work of children, and then the nature of the work itself. From the beginning of manufacturing industry, children have been employed in mills, at first almost exclusively by reason of the smallness of the machines, which were later enlarged. Even children from the workhouses were employed in multitudes, being rented out for a number of years to the manufacturers as apprentices. They were lodged, fed, and clothed in common, and were, of course, completely the slaves of their masters, by whom they were treated with the utmost recklessness and barbarity. As early as 1796, the public objection to this revolting system found such vigorous expression through Dr Percival and Sir Robert Peel (father of the Cabinet Minister, and himself a cotton manufacturer), that in 1802 Parliament passed an Apprentices' Bill, by which the most crying evils were removed. Gradually the increasing competition of free workpeople crowded out the whole apprentice system; factories were built in cities, machinery was constructed on a large scale, and work-rooms were made more airy and wholesome; gradually, too, more work was found for adults and young persons. The number of children in the mills diminished somewhat, and the age at which they began to work rose a little; few children under eight or nine years were now employed. Later, as we shall see, the power of the State intervened several times to protect them from the money-greed of the bourgeoisie.

The great mortality among children of the working class, and especially among those of the factory operatives, is proof enough of the unwholesome conditions under which they pass their first years. These influences are at work, of course, among the children who survive, but not quite so powerfully as upon those who succumb. The result in the most favourable case is a tendency to disease, or some check in development, and consequent less than normal vigour of the constitution. A nine years old child of a factory

operative that has grown up in want, privation, and changing conditions, in cold and damp, with insufficient clothing and unwholesome dwellings, is far from having the working strength of a child brought up under healthier conditions. At nine years of age it is sent into the mill to work 6½ hours (formerly 8, earlier still, 12 to 14, even 16 hours) daily, until the thirteenth year; then twelve hours until the eighteenth year. The old enfeebling influences continue, while the work is added to them. It is not to be denied that a child of nine years, even an operative's child, can hold out through 6½ hours' daily work, without any one being able to trace visible bad results in its development directly to this cause; but in no case can its presence in the damp, heavy air of the factory, often at once warm and wet, contribute to good health; and, in any case, it is unpardonable to sacrifice to the greed of an unfeeling bourgeoisie the time of children which should be devoted solely to their physical and mental development, withdraw them from school and the fresh air, in order to wear them out for the benefit of the manufacturers. The bourgeoisie says: 'If we do not employ the children in the mills, they are only left under conditions unfavourable to their development'; and this is true on the whole. But what does this mean if it is not a confession that the bourgeoisie first places the children of the working-class under unfavourable conditions, and then exploits these bad conditions for its own benefit, appeals to that which is as much its own fault as the factory system, excuses the sin of to-day with the sin of yesterday? And if the Factory Act did not in some measure fetter their hands, how this "humane", this "benevolent" bourgeoisie, which has built its factories solely for the good of the working-class, would take care of the interests of these workers! Let us hear how they acted before the factory inspector was at their heels. Their own admitted testimony will convict them in the report of the Factories' Inquiry Commission of 1833.[1]

The report of the Central Commission relates that the manufacturers began to employ children rarely of five years, often of six, very often of seven, usually of eight to nine years; that the working day often lasted fourteen to sixteen hours, exclusive of

meals and intervals; that the manufacturers permitted overlookers to flog and maltreat children, and often took an active part in so doing themselves. One case is related of a Scotch manufacturer, who rode after a sixteen years old runaway, forced him to return, running after the employee as fast as the master's horse trotted, and beat him the whole way with a long whip. In the large towns where the operatives resisted more vigorously, such things naturally happened less often. But even this long working-day failed to satisfy the greed of the capitalists. Their aim was to make the capital invested in the building and machinery produce the highest return, by every available means, to make it work as actively as possible. Hence the manufacturers introduced the shameful system of night-work. Some of them employed two sets of operatives, each numerous enough to fill the whole mill, and let one set work the twelve hours of the day, and the other the twelve hours of the night. It is needless to picture the effect upon the frames of young children, and even upon the health of young persons and adults, produced by permanent loss of sleep at night, which cannot be made good by any amount of sleep during the day. Irritation of the whole nervous system, with general lassitude and enfeeblement of the entire frame, were the inevitable results, with the fostering of temptation to drunkenness and unbridled sexual indulgence. One manufacturer testifies that during the two years in which night-work was carried on in his factory, the number of illegitimate children born was doubled, and such general demoralization prevailed that he was obliged to give up night-work. Other manufacturers were yet more barbarous, requiring many hands to work thirty to forty hours at a stretch, several times a week, letting them get a couple of hours sleep only, because the night-shift was not complete, but calculated to replace a part of the operatives.

The reports of the Commission touching this barbarism surpass everything that is known to me in this line. Such infamies as are here related are nowhere else to be found—yet we shall see that the bourgeoisie constantly appeals to the testimony of the Commission as being in its own favour. The consequences of these cruelties

became evident quickly enough. The Commissioners mention a crowd of cripples who appeared before them, who clearly owed their distortion to the long working-hours. This distortion usually consists of a curving of the spinal column and legs, and is described as follows by Francis Sharp, M.R.C.S., of Leeds:

> "I never saw the peculiar bending of the lower ends of the thigh bones before I came to Leeds. At first I thought it was rachitis, but I was soon led to change my opinion in consequence of the mass of patients who presented themselves at the hospital, and the appearances of the disease at an age (from eight to fourteen) in which children are usually not subject to rachitis, as well as by the circumstance that the malady had first appeared after children began to work in the mills. Thus far I have seen about a hundred such cases, and can, most decidedly, express the opinion that they are the consequences of overwork. So far as I know they were all mill children, and themselves attributed the evil to this cause. The number of cases of curvature of the spine which has fallen under my observation, and which were evidently consequent upon too protracted standing, was not less than three hundred."

Precisely similar is the testimony of Dr Hey, for eighteen years physician in the hospital in Leeds:

> "Malformations of the spine are very frequent among mill-hands; some of them consequent upon mere overwork, others the effect of long work upon constitutions originally feeble, or weakened by bad food. Deformities seem even more frequent than these diseases; the knees were bent inward, the ligaments very often relaxed and enfeebled, and the long bones of the legs bent. The thick ends of these long bones were especially apt to be bent and disproportionately developed, and these patients came from the factories in which long work-hours were of frequent occurrence."

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The most common accident is the squeezing off of a single joint of a finger, somewhat less common the loss of the whole finger, half or a whole hand, an arm, etc., in the machinery. Lockjaw very often follows, even upon the lesser among these injuries, and brings death with it. Besides the deformed persons, a great number of maimed ones may be seen going about in Manchester; this one has lost an arm or a part of one, that one a foot, the third half a leg; it is like living in the midst of an army just returned from a campaign. But the most dangerous portion of the machinery is the strapping which conveys motive power from the shaft to the separate machines, especially if it contains buckles, which, however, are rarely used now. Whoever is seized by the strap is carried up with lightning speed, thrown against the ceiling above and floor below with such force that there is rarely a whole bone left in the body, and death follows instantly. Between June 12th and August 13th, 1843, the *Manchester Guardian* reported the following serious accidents (the trifling ones it does not notice): June 12th, a boy died in Manchester of lockjaw, caused by his hand being crushed between wheels. June 16th, a youth in Saddleworth seized by a wheel and carried away with it; died, horribly mangled. June 29th, a young man at Green Acres Moor, near Manchester, at work in a machine shop, fell under the grindstone, which broke two of his ribs and lacerated him terribly. July 24th, a girl in Oldham died, carried around fifty times by a strap; no bone unbroken. July 27th, a girl in Manchester seized by the blower (the first machine that receives the raw cotton), and died of injuries received. 3 August, a bobbins turner died in Dukenfield, caught in a strap, every rib broken. In the year 1843, the Manchester Infirmary treated 962 cases of wounds and mutilations caused by machinery, while the number of all other accidents within the district of the hospital was 2,426, so that for five accidents from all other causes, two were caused by machinery. The accidents which happened in Salford are not included here, nor those treated by surgeons in private practice. In such cases, whether or not the accident unfits the victim for further work, the employer, at best,

pays the doctor, or, in very exceptional cases, he may pay wages during treatment; what becomes of the operative afterwards, in case he cannot work, is no concern of the employer.

The Factory Report says on this subject, that employers must be made responsible for all cases, since children cannot take care, and adults will take care in their own interest. But the gentlemen who write the report are bourgeois, and so they must contradict themselves and bring up later all sorts of bosh on the subject of the culpable temerity of the operatives.

The state of the case is this: If children cannot take care, the employment of children must be forbidden. If adults are reckless, they must be mere over-grown children on a plane of intelligence which does not enable them to appreciate the danger in its full scope; and who is to blame for this but the bourgeoisie which keeps them in a condition in which their intelligence cannot develop? Or the machinery is ill-arranged, and must be surrounded with fencing, to supply which falls to the share of the bourgeoisie. Or the operative is under inducements which outweigh the threatened danger; he must work rapidly to earn his wages, has no time to take care, and for this too, the bourgeoisie is to blame. Many accidents happen, for instance, while the operatives are cleaning machinery in motion. Why? Because the bourgeois would otherwise oblige the worker to clean the machinery during the free hours while it is not in motion, and the worker naturally is not disposed to sacrifice any part of his free time. Every free hour is so precious to the worker that he often risks his life twice a week rather than sacrifice one of them to the bourgeois. Let the employer take from working-hours the time required for cleaning the machinery, and it will never again occur to an operative to clean machinery in motion. In short, from whatever point of view, the blame falls ultimately on the manufacturer, and of him should be required, at the very least, life-long support of the incapacitated operative, and support of the victim’s family in case death follows the accident. In the earliest period of manufacture, the accidents were much more numerous in proportion than now, for the machinery was inferior, smaller, more crowded, and almost never

fenced. But the number is still large enough, as the foregoing cases prove, to arouse grave questions as to a state of things which permits so many deformities and mutilations for the benefit of a single class, and plunges so many industrious working-people into want and starvation by reason of injuries undergone in the service and through the fault of the bourgeoisie.

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1845, 1887

Endnotes

- Note 1: A parliamentary commission investigating working conditions in textile factories.Return to reference 1

MATTHEW ARNOLD
1822–1888

How is a full and enjoyable life to be lived in a rapidly industrializing and democratizing society? This is the question raised in Matthew Arnold's poetry; his prose attempts some answers. In response to rapid and potentially dislocating social changes, Arnold strove to help his contemporaries achieve a richer intellectual, emotional, and cultural existence.

Arnold was born in Laleham, a village in the valley of the Thames. At the age of six, he was moved to Rugby School, where his father, Dr. Thomas Arnold, had become headmaster. Dr. Arnold became a well-known educational reformer: a teacher who instilled in his pupils an earnest preoccupation with moral and social issues as well as an awareness of the connection between a liberal (or broad, nonvocational) education and modern life. At Rugby, Matthew, the eldest son, was directly exposed to the powerful force of his father's mind and character. That he was permanently influenced by his father is evident in his poems and in his writings on religion, education, and politics; but, like many sons of clergymen, he also rebelled. As a student at Oxford, he dressed and behaved like a dandy: alternately languid or merry in manner. "His manner displeases, from its seeming foppery," wrote Charlotte Brontë after talking with the young man in later years. "The shade of Dr. Arnold," she added, "seemed to me to frown on his young representative." Even Arnold's studies did not seem to occupy him seriously. By a

session of cramming, he managed to earn second-class honors in his final examinations, a near disaster. Arnold's biographers usually dismiss his youthful frivolity of spirit as only a temporary pose or mask, but it permanently colored his prose style, brightening his most serious criticism with geniality and wit.

Unlike authors such as Alfred, Lord Tennyson and George Eliot, who committed themselves solely to their literary pursuits, Arnold confined his writing and reading to his spare time. In 1847 he took the post of private secretary to Lord Lansdowne; and in 1851, the year of his marriage, he became an inspector of schools, a demanding and time-consuming position that he held for thirty-five years. Although his work as an inspector may have reduced his output as a writer, it had several advantages. His extensive traveling in England took him to the homes of the more ardently Protestant middle classes. As a result, when he criticized the dullness of middle-class life (as he often did), his criticism was based on intimate knowledge. His position also led to travel on the Continent to study the schools of Europe, thus enabling him to make helpful comparisons and to draw on a stock of fresh ideas. Despite the monotony of much of his work as an inspector, Arnold was convinced of its importance. It contributed to what he regarded as his century's most pressing need: the development of a satisfactory national system of education.

Today Arnold is perhaps better known as a writer of prose than as a poet, although individual poems such as "Dover Beach" (1867) continue to be widely popular. During his lifetime, his poetry was well regarded and sometimes even preferred to his prose. Given Arnold's sophistication, it is perhaps surprising that his evocations of nature function so memorably in his poetry: rather than simply providing a picturesque backdrop, the setting—seashore or river or mountaintop—draws the poem's meaning together. In this respect, as in many others, Arnold displays a debt to William Wordsworth; but he also draws on his own bond with particular landscapes, especially those associated with his youth and early adulthood. The stanzas of "The Scholar Gypsy" (1853), for instance, are suffused in

a deep familiarity with the changing patterns of the rural scene, from the "frail-leafed, white anemone" and "dark bluebells drenched with dews" of May to the "scarlet poppies" and "pale pink convolvulus" of August.

Arnold's career as a writer can be roughly divided into four periods. He wrote and published poetry in the 1850s; in the 1860s, he turned to literary criticism and social criticism; in the 1870s, he focused on issues of religion and education; and in the 1880s, he wrote a second set of essays in literary criticism. One question this trajectory raises is why Arnold chose to abandon poetry. In a letter to his friend Arthur Hugh Clough in the 1850s, he begins to offer an answer: "I am glad you like the *Gypsy Scholar*—but what does it *do* for you? Homer *animates*—Shakespeare *animates*—in its poor way I think *Sohrab and Rustum animates*—the *Gypsy Scholar* at best awakens a pleasing melancholy. But this is not what we want." Early in his career Arnold had evolved a theory of what poetry should do for its readers, a theory based, in part, on his impression of what classical poetry had achieved. As he says in the 1853 preface to his *Poems*, poetry must "inspirit and rejoice the reader"; it must "convey a charm, and infuse delight." Such a demand does not exclude tragic poetry, but it does exclude works "in which suffering finds no vent in action; in which a continual state of mental distress is prolonged." In his prose his melancholy and "morbid" personality was subordinated to the resolutely cheerful and purposeful character he had created for himself. And although he could on occasion recommend the richness of language of such poets as John Keats or Tennyson—their "natural magic," as he called it—Arnold usually preferred literature that was unadorned and possessed the quality of "high seriousness." In a world in which the role of formal religion appeared to be shrinking, Arnold increasingly emphasized that the writer must be a serious thinker who could offer guidance to his readers.

Arnold's starting point as a critic of society is different from that of Carlyle and John Ruskin. While the older prophets attacked the Victorian middle classes on the grounds of their materialism and their selfish indifference to the sufferings of the poor, Arnold argued

instead that the "Philistines," as he called them, were not so much wicked as ignorant, narrow-minded, and suffering from the dullness of their private lives. This novel analysis was reinforced by Arnold's conviction that the world of the future, both in England and in America, would be a middle-class world and therefore would be dominated by a class inadequately equipped either to lead or to enjoy civilized living.

Arnold's relentless exposure of middle-class narrow-mindedness in his own country eventually led him into the arena of religious controversy. As a critic of religious institutions, he was arguing, in effect, that just as the middle classes did not know how to lead full lives, neither did they know how to read the Bible intelligently or attend church intelligently. Of the Christian religion he remarked that there are two things "that surely must be clear to anybody with eyes in his head. One is, that men cannot do without it; the other that they cannot do with it as it is." His three full-length studies of the Bible, including *Literature and Dogma* (1873), are thus best considered a postscript to his social criticism. The Bible, to Arnold, was a great work of literature like the *Odyssey*, and the Church of England was a great national institution like Parliament. Both Bible and Church must be preserved not because historical Christianity was credible but because both, when properly understood, were agents of what he called "culture"—they contributed to making humanity more civilized.

"Culture" is perhaps Arnold's most familiar catchword, although what he meant by it has sometimes been misunderstood. He used the term to capture the qualities of an open-minded intelligence (as described in "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" [1864]) —a refusal to take things on authority. In this respect Arnold appears close to someone like J. S. Mill. But the word also connotes a full awareness of humanity's past and a capacity to enjoy the best works of art, literature, history, and philosophy that have come down to us from that past. As a way of viewing life in all its aspects, including the social, political, and religious, culture represents for Arnold the most effective cure for the ills of a sick society.

The attempt to define *culture* brings us to a final aspect of Arnold's career as a critic: his writings on education, in which he sought to make cultural values "prevail." At the core of nearly all his writings is his belief that good education is *the* crucial need. Arnold was essentially a great teacher. He has the faults of a teacher—a tendency to repeat himself, to lean too hard on formulaic phrases. He also has the great teacher's virtues, in particular the ability to convey to us the conviction on which all his arguments are based. This conviction is that the humanist tradition can enable the individual man or woman to live life more fully and to change the course of society. He believes that a democratic society can thrive only if its citizens become educated in "the best that is known and thought," which he equated with the Western tradition. In 1852, writing to Clough on the subject of equality, Arnold observed: "I am more and more convinced that the world tends to become more comfortable for the mass, and more uncomfortable for those of any natural gift or distinction—and it is as well perhaps that it should be so—for hitherto the gifted have astonished and delighted the world, but not trained or inspired or in any real way changed it." In making this claim, he was both embracing his responsibility as an educator of the world and criticizing the educated elite to which he belonged for its failure to do more, to do better.

Isolation. To Marguerite[1]

We were apart; yet, day by day,
I bade my heart more constant be.
I bade it keep the world away,
And grow a home for only thee;
Nor feared but thy love likewise grew,
Like mine, each day, more tried, more true.

The fault was grave! I might have known,
What far too soon, alas! I learned—
The heart can bind itself alone,
And faith may oft be unreturned.
Self-swayed our feelings ebb and swell—
Thou lov'st no more—Farewell! Farewell!
Farewell!—and thou, thou lonely heart,[2]
Which never yet without remorse
Even for a moment didst depart
From thy remote and spherèd course
To haunt the place where passions reign—
Back to thy solitude again!

Back with the conscious thrill of shame
Which Luna felt, that summer night,
Flash through her pure immortal frame,
When she forsook the starry height
To hang over Endymion's sleep
Upon the pine-grown Latmian steep.[3]
Yet she, chaste queen, had never proved
How vain a thing is mortal love,
Wandering in Heaven, far removed.
But thou hast long had place to prove°
This truth—to prove, and make thine own:

"Thou hast been, shalt be, art, alone."

Or, if not quite alone, yet they
Which touch thee are unmating things—
Ocean and clouds and night and day;
Lorn autumns and triumphant springs;
And life, and others' joy and pain,
And love, if love, of happier men.

Of happier men—for they, at least,
Have *dreamed* two human hearts might blend
In one, and were through faith released
From isolation without end
Prolonged; nor knew, although not less
Alone than thou, their loneliness.

1849 1857

Endnotes

- Note 1: Addressed to a woman Arnold is reputed to have met in Switzerland in the 1840s. It has been commonly assumed that she was French or Swiss; but some recent biographies speculate she might have been Mary Claude, a woman Arnold knew in England at this same period who, though English, had connections with Germany and had translated German prose and verse.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Presumably the speaker's heart, not Marguerite's.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Luna (or Diana), virgin goddess of the moon, fell in love with Endymion, a handsome shepherd whom she discovered asleep on Mount Latmos.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *test*Return to reference °

To Marguerite—Continued

Yes! in the sea of life enisled,°
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal millions live *alone.*
The islands feel the enclasping flow,
And then their endless bounds they know.

But when the moon their hollows lights,
And they are swept by balms of spring,
And in their glens, on starry nights,
The nightingales divinely sing;
And lovely notes, from shore to shore,
Across the sounds and channels pour—

Oh! then a longing like despair
Is to their farthest caverns sent;
For surely once, they feel, we were
Parts of a single continent!
Now round us spreads the watery plain—
Oh might our marges° meet again!

Who ordered that their longing's fire
Should be, as soon as kindled, cooled?
Who renders vain their deep desire?—
A God, a God their severance ruled!
And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumbed, salt, estranging sea.

1849 1852

Notes

- °: *encircled* Return to reference °

- °: *margins, edges*Return to reference °

The Buried Life

Light flows our war of mocking words, and yet,
Behold, with tears mine eyes are wet!
I feel a nameless sadness o’er me roll.
Yes, yes, we know that we can jest,
We know, we know that we can smile!
But there’s a something in this breast,
To which thy light words bring no rest,
And thy gay smiles no anodyne.
Give me thy hand, and hush awhile,
And turn those limpid eyes on mine,
And let me read there, love! thy inmost soul.

Alas! is even love too weak
To unlock the heart, and let it speak?
Are even lovers powerless to reveal
To one another what indeed they feel?
I knew the mass of men concealed
Their thoughts, for fear that if revealed
They would by other men be met
With blank indifference, or with blame reproved;
I knew they lived and moved
Tricked° in disguises, alien to the rest
Of men, and alien to themselves—and yet
The same heart beats in every human breast!

But we, my love!—doth a like spell benumb
Our hearts, our voices?—must we too be dumb?
Ah! well for us, if even we,
Even for a moment, can get free
Our heart, and have our lips unchained;
For that which seals them hath been deep-ordained!

Fate, which foresaw
How frivolous a baby man would be—
By what distractions he would be possessed,
How he would pour himself in every strife,
And well-nigh change his own identity—
That it might keep from his capricious play
His genuine self, and force him to obey
Even in his own despite his being's law,
Bade through the deep recesses of our breast
The unregarded river of our life
Pursue with indiscernible flow its way;
And that we should not see
The buried stream, and seem to be
Eddying at large in blind uncertainty,
Though driving on with it eternally.

But often, in the world's most crowded streets,[1]
But often, in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life;
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
In tracking out our true, original course;
A longing to inquire
Into the mystery of this heart which beats
So wild, so deep in us—to know
Whence our lives come and where they go.
And many a man in his own breast then delves,
But deep enough, alas! none ever mines.
And we have been on many thousand lines,
And we have shown, on each, spirit and power;
But hardly have we, for one little hour,
Been on our own line, have we been ourselves—
Hardly had skill to utter one of all
The nameless feelings that course through our breast,

But they course on forever unexpressed.
And long we try in vain to speak and act
Our hidden self, and what we say and do
Is eloquent, is well—but ’tis not true!
And then we will no more be racked
With inward striving, and demand
Of all the thousand nothings of the hour
Their stupefying power;
Ah yes, and they benumb us at our call!
Yet still, from time to time, vague and forlorn,
From the soul’s subterranean depth upborne
As from an infinitely distant land,
Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey
A melancholy into all our day.[2]

Only—but this is rare—
When a beloved hand is laid in ours,
When, jaded with the rush and glare
Of the interminable hours,
Our eyes can in another’s eyes read clear,
When our world-deafened ear
Is by the tones of a loved voice caressed—
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again.
The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,
And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know.
A man becomes aware of his life’s flow,
And hears its winding murmur; and he sees
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.

And there arrives a lull in the hot race
Wherein he doth forever chase
That flying and elusive shadow, rest.
An air of coolness plays upon his face,
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast.

And then he thinks he knows
95 The hills where his life rose,
And the sea where it goes.

1852

Endnotes

- Note 1: This passage, like many others in Arnold's poetry, illustrates William Wordsworth's effect on his writings. In this instance compare with Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey (1798), lines 25–27: "But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din / Of towns and cities, I have owed to them, / In hours of weariness, sensations sweet." Compare with also *The Prelude* (1850) 7.626: "How oft amid those overflowing streets."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare with Wordworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" (1807), lines 149–51: "Those shadowy recollections, / Which, be they what they may, / Are yet the fountain light of all our day."Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *dressed up*Return to reference °

Lines Written in Kensington Gardens[1]

In this lone, open glade I lie,
Screened by deep boughs on either hand;
And at its end, to stay the eye,
Those black-crowned, red-boled pine trees stand!

Birds here make song, each bird has his,
Across the girdling city's hum.
How green under the boughs it is!
How thick the tremulous sheep-cries come![2]

Sometimes a child will cross the glade
To take his nurse his broken toy;
Sometimes a thrush flit overhead
Deep in her unknown day's employ.

Here at my feet what wonders pass,
What endless, active life is here!
What blowing daisies, fragrant grass!
An air-stirred forest, fresh and clear.

Scarce fresher is the mountain sod
Where the tired angler lies, stretched out,
And, eased of basket and of rod,
Counts his day's spoil, the spotted trout.

In the huge world, which roars hard° by,
Be others happy if they can!
But in my helpless cradle I
Was breathed on by the rural Pan.[3]

I, on men's impious uproar hurled,

Think often, as I hear them rave,
That peace has left the upper world
And now keeps only in the grave.

Yet here is peace forever new!
When I who watch them am away,
Still all things in this glade go through
The changes of their quiet day.

Then to their happy rest they pass!
The flowers upclose, the birds are fed,
The night comes down upon the grass,
The child sleeps warmly in his bed.

Calm soul of all things! make it mine
To feel, amid the city's jar,
That there abides a peace of thine,
Man did not make, and cannot mar.

The will to neither strive nor cry,
The power to feel with others give!
Calm, calm me more! nor let me die
Before I have begun to live.

1852

Endnotes

- Note 1: A park in the heart of London.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Sheep sometimes grazed in London parks.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In Greek mythology the god of woods and pastures.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *close*Return to reference °

The Scholar Gypsy The story of a seventeenth-century student who left Oxford and joined a band of gypsies had made a strong impression on Arnold. In the poem he wistfully imagines that the spirit of this scholar is still to be encountered in the Cumner countryside near Oxford, having achieved immortality by a serene pursuit of the secret of human existence. Like Keats's nightingale, the scholar has escaped "the weariness, the fever, and the fret" of modern life.

At the outset the poet addresses a shepherd who has been helping him in his search for traces of the scholar. The shepherd is addressed as *you.* After line 61, with the shift to *thou* and *thy,* the person addressed is the scholar, and the poet thereafter sometimes uses the pronoun *we* to indicate he is speaking for all humanity of later generations.

About the setting Arnold wrote to his brother Tom on May 15, 1857: "You alone of my brothers are associated with that life at Oxford, the *freest* and most delightful part, perhaps, of my life, when with you and Clough and Walrond I shook off all the bonds and formalities of the place, and enjoyed the spring of life and that unforgotten Oxfordshire and Berkshire country. Do you remember a poem of mine called 'The Scholar Gipsy'? It was meant to fix the remembrance of those delightful wanderings of ours in the Cumner Hills."

The passage from Joseph Glanvill's *Vanity of Dogmatizing* (1661) that inspired the poem was included by Arnold as a note:

> There was very lately a lad in the University of Oxford, who was by his poverty forced to leave his studies there; and at last to join himself to a company of vagabond gypsies. Among these extravagant people, by the insinuating subtilty of his carriage, he quickly got so much of their love and esteem as that they discovered to him their mystery. After he had been a pretty while exercised in the trade, there chanced to ride by a couple of scholars, who had formerly been of his acquaintance. They quickly spied out their old friend among

the gypsies; and he gave them an account of the necessity which drove him to that kind of life, and told them that the people he went with were not such imposters as they were taken for, but that they had a traditional kind of learning among them, and could do wonders by the power of imagination, their fancy binding that of others: that himself had learned much of their art, and when he had compassed the whole secret, he intended, he said, to leave their company, and give the world an account of what he had learned.

The Scholar Gypsy

Go, for they call you, shepherd, from the hill;
Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes![1]
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,
Nor the cropped herbage shoot another head.
But when the fields are still,
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanched green,
Come, shepherd, and again begin the quest!

Here, where the reaper was at work of late—
In this high field's dark corner, where he leaves
His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruse,[2]
And in the sun all morning binds the sheaves,
Then here, at noon, comes back his stores to use—
Here will I sit and wait,
While to my ear from uplands far away
The bleating of the folded° flocks is borne,
With distant cries of reapers in the corn°—
All the live murmur of a summer's day.

Screened is this nook o'er the high, half-reaped field,
And here till sundown, shepherd! will I be.
Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,
And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see
Pale pink convolvulus in tendrils creep;
And air-swept lindens yield

Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,
And bower me from the August sun with shade;
And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers.

And near me on the grass lies Glanvill's book—
Come, let me read the oft-read tale again!
The story of the Oxford scholar poor,
Of pregnant parts[3] and quick inventive brain,
Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door,
One summer morn forsook
His friends, and went to learn the gypsy lore,
And roamed the world with that wild brotherhood,
And came, as most men deemed, to little good,
But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

But once, years after, in the country lanes,
Two scholars, whom at college erst° he knew,
Met him, and of his way of life inquired;
Whereat he answered, that the gypsy crew,
His mates, had arts to rule as they desired
The workings of men's brains,
And they can bind them to what thoughts they will.
"And I," he said, "the secret of their art,
When fully learned, will to the world impart;
But it needs heaven-sent moments for this skill."

This said, he left them, and returned no more.—
But rumors hung about the countryside,
That the lost Scholar long was seen to stray,
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,
In hat of antique shape, and cloak of grey,
The same the gypsies wore.

Shepherds had met him on the Hurst[4] in spring;
At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors,
On the warm ingle-bench,[5] the smock-frocked boors°
Had found him seated at their entering,

But, 'mid their drink and clatter, he would fly.
And I myself seem half to know thy looks,
And put the shepherds, wanderer! on thy trace;
And boys who in lone wheatfields scare the rooks
I ask if thou hast passed their quiet place;
Or in my boat I lie
Moored to the cool bank in the summer heats,
'Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine fills,
And watch the warm, green-muffled Cumner hills,
And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy retreats.

For most, I know, thou lov'st retired ground!
Thee at the ferry Oxford riders blithe,
Returning home on summer nights, have met
Crossing the stripling Thames at Bab-lock-hithe,[6]
Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,
As the punt's rope chops round;[7]
And leaning backward in a pensive dream,
And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers
Plucked in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers,
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream.

And then they land, and thou art seen no more!—
Maidens, who from the distant hamlets come
To dance around the Fyfield elm in May,
Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee roam,

Or cross a stile into the public way.
Oft thou hast given them store
Of flowers—the frail-leafed, white anemone,
Dark bluebells drenched with dews of summer eves,
And purple orchises with spotted leaves—
But none hath words she can report of thee.

And, above Godstow Bridge, when hay time's here
In June, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,
Men who through those wide fields of breezy grass
Where black-winged swallows haunt the glittering Thames,
To bathe in the abandoned lasher[8] pass,
Have often passed thee near
Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown;
Marked thine outlandish garb, thy figure spare,
Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air—
But, when they came from bathing, thou wast gone!

At some lone homestead in the Cumner hills,
Where at her open door the housewife darns,
Thou hast been seen, or hanging on a gate
To watch the threshers in the mossy barns.
Children, who early range these slopes and late
For cresses from the rills,
Have known thee eying, all an April day,
The springing pastures and the feeding kine;°
And marked thee, when the stars come out and shine,
Through the long dewy grass move slow away.

In autumn, on the skirts of Bagley Wood—
Where most the gypsies by the turf-edged way

Pitch their smoked tents, and every bush you see
With scarlet patches tagged and shreds of grey,
Above the forest ground called Thessaly—
The blackbird, picking food,
Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all;
So often has he known thee past him stray,
Rapt, twirling in thy hand a withered spray,
And waiting for the spark from heaven to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill
Where home through flooded fields foot-travelers go,
Have I not passed thee on the wooden bridge,
Wrapped in thy cloak and battling with the snow,
Thy face tow'rd Hinksey and its wintry ridge?
And thou hast climbed the hill,
And gained the white brow of the Cumner range;
Turned once to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,
The line of festal light in Christ Church hall[9]—
Then sought thy straw in some sequestered grange.°

But what—I dream! Two hundred years are flown
Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,
And the grave Glanvill did the tale inscribe
That thou wert wandered from the studious walls
To learn strange arts, and join a gypsy tribe;
And thou from earth art gone
Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid—
Some country nook, where o'er thy unknown grave
Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave,
Under a dark, red-fruited yew tree's shade.

—No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours!
For what wears out the life of mortal men?
'Tis that from change to change their being rolls;
'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls
And numb the elastic powers.
Till having used our nerves with bliss and teen,°
And tired upon a thousand schemes our wit,
To the just-pausing Genius[1] we remit
Our worn-out life, and are—what we have been.

Thou hast not lived, why should'st thou perish, so?
Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire;
Else wert thou long since numbered with the dead!
Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy fire!
The generations of thy peers are fled,
And we ourselves shall go;
But thou possessest an immortal lot,
And we imagine thee exempt from age
And living as thou liv'st on Glanvill's page,
Because thou hadst—what we, alas! have not.

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers
Fresh, undiverted to the world without,
Firm to their mark, not spent on other things;
Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,
Which much to have tried, in much been baffled, brings.
O life unlike to ours!
Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,
Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives,
And each half[2] lives a hundred different lives;

Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.

Thou waitest for the spark from heaven! and we,
Light half-believers of our casual creeds,
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly willed,
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,
Whose vague resolves never have been fulfilled;
For whom each year we see
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new;
Who hesitate and falter life away,
And lose tomorrow the ground won today—
Ah! do not we, wanderer! await it too?

Yes, we await it!—but it still delays,
And then we suffer! and amongst us one,[3]
Who most has suffered, takes dejectedly
His seat upon the intellectual throne;
And all his store of sad experience he
Lays bare of wretched days;
Tells us his misery's birth and growth and signs,
And how the dying spark of hope was fed,
And how the breast was soothed, and how the head,
And all his hourly varied anodynes.

This for our wisest! and we others pine,
And wish the long unhappy dream would end,
And waive all claim to bliss, and try to bear;
With close-lipped patience for our only friend,
Sad patience, too near neighbor to despair—
But none has hope like thine!
Thou through the fields and through the woods dost stray,
Roaming the countryside, a truant boy,
Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,
And every doubt long blown by time away.

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;
Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertaxed, its palsied hearts, was rife—
Fly hence, our contact fear!
Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood!
Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern
From her false friend's approach in Hades turn,[4]
Wave us away, and keep thy solitude!

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
Still clutching the inviolable shade,
With a free, onward impulse brushing through,
By night, the silvered branches of the glade—
Far on the forest skirts, where none pursue.
On some mild pastoral slope
Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales
Freshen thy flowers as in former years
With dew, or listen with enchanted ears,
From the dark dingles,° to the nightingales!

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
For strong the infection of our mental strife,
Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest;
And we should win thee from thy own fair life,
Like us distracted, and like us unblest.
Soon, soon thy cheer would die,
Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfixed thy powers,
And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made;
And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,
Fade, and grow old at last, and die like ours.

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles!

—As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,
Descried at sunrise an emerging prow
Lifting the cool-haired creepers stealthily,
The fringes of a southward-facing brow
Among the Aegean isles;
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,
Freighted with amber grapes, and Chian wine,
Green, bursting figs, and tunnies° steeped in brine—
And knew the intruders on his ancient home,

The young lighthearted masters of the waves—
And snatched his rudder, and shook out more sail;
And day and night held on indignantly
O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,
Betwixt the Syrtes[5] and soft Sicily,
To where the Atlantic raves
Outside the western straits; and unbent sails
There, where down cloudy cliffs, through sheets of foam,
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians[6] come;
And on the beach undid his corded bales.[7]

1853

Endnotes

- Note 1: Sheep pens woven from sticks.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Pot or jug for carrying his drink.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Of rich conception, many ideas.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A hill near Oxford. All the place-names in the poem (except those in the final two stanzas) refer to the countryside near Oxford.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Fireside bench.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: Or Bablock Hythe (a *hithe* or *hythe* is a landing place on a river). "Stripling Thames": narrow upper reaches of the river before it broadens out to its full width.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The scholar's flat-bottomed boat ("punt") is tied up by a rope at the riverbank near the ferry crossing like the speaker's boat (in the previous stanza), which was "moored to the cool bank." The motion of the boat as it is stirred by the current of the river causes the chopping sound of the rope in the water.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Water that spills over a dam or weir.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The dining hall of this Oxford college.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Perhaps the spirit of the universe, which pauses briefly to receive back the life given to us. (In Roman mythology a *genius* was an attendant spirit.)Return to reference 1
- Note 2: An adverb modifying "lives."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Probably Goethe, although possibly referring to Tennyson, whose *In Memoriam* had appeared in 1850.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Dido committed suicide after her lover, Aeneas, deserted her. When he later encountered her in Hades, she silently turned away from him (see Virgil's *Aeneid,* book 6).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Shoals off the coast of North Africa.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Dark inhabitants of Spain and Portugal—perhaps associated with gypsies.Return to reference 6
- Note 7:
  The elaborate simile of the final two stanzas has been variously interpreted. The trader from Tyre (a Phoenician city, on the coast of what is now Lebanon) is disconcerted to see a new business rival, "the merry Grecian coaster," emerging from one of his habitual trading ports in the Greek islands. Like the Scholar Gypsy, when similarly intruded on by hearty extroverts, he resolves to flee and seek a less competitive sphere of life.

The reference (line 249) to the Iberians as "*shy* traffickers" (traders) is explained by Kenneth Allott as having been derived from Herodotus's *History* (4.196). Herodotus describes a distinctive method of selling goods established by merchants from Carthage who used to sail through the Strait of Gibraltar to trade with the inhabitants of the coast of West Africa. The Carthaginians would leave bales of their merchandise on display along the beaches and, without having seen their prospective customers, would return to their ships. The Indigenous people would then come down from their inland hiding places and set gold beside the bales they wished to buy. When the Indigenous people withdrew in their turn, the Carthaginians would return to the beach and decide whether payments were adequate, a process repeated until agreement was reached. On the Atlantic coasts this method of bargaining persisted into the 19th century. As William Beloe, a translator of the ancient Greek historian, noted in 1844: "In this manner they transact their exchange without seeing one another, or without the least instance of dishonesty . . . on either side." For the solitary Tyrian trader such a procedure, with its avoidance of "contact" (line 221), would have been especially appropriate.
Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *penned up*Return to reference °
- °: *grain or wheat*Return to reference °
- °: *long ago*Return to reference °
- °: *rustics*Return to reference °
- °: *cattle*Return to reference °
- °: *farmhouse*Return to reference °
- °: *vexation*Return to reference °
- °: *small deep valleys*Return to reference °
- °: *tuna fish*Return to reference °

Dover Beach

The sea is calm tonight.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits—on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanched land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery;[8] we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.[9]
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles[1] of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies[2] clash by night.

ca. 1851 1867

Endnotes

- Note 8: A reference to a chorus in *Antigone* that compares human sorrow to the sound of the waves moving the sand beneath them (lines 585–91).Return to reference 8
- Note 9:
  This difficult line means, in general, that at high tide the sea envelops the land closely. Its forces are "gathered" up (to use William Wordsworth's term) like the "folds" of bright clothing ("girdle") that have been compressed ("furled"). At ebb tide, as the sea retreats, it is unfurled and spread out. It still surrounds the shoreline but not as an "enclasping flow" (as in "To Marguerite—Continued").
  Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Beaches covered with pebbles.Return to reference 1
- Note 2:
  Perhaps alluding to conflicts in Arnold's own time such as occurred during the revolutions of 1848 in Europe, or at the Siege of Rome by the French in 1849 (the poem's date of composition is unknown, although generally assumed to be 1851). But the passage also refers back to another battle, one that occurred more than two thousand years earlier when an Athenian army was attempting an invasion of Sicily at nighttime. As this "night battle" was described by the ancient Greek

historian Thucydides in his *History of the Peloponnesian War* (7.44), the invaders became confused by darkness and slaughtered many of their own men. Hence "ignorant armies." Return to reference 2

Preface to *Poems* (1853)

In two small volumes of poems, published anonymously, one in 1849, the other in 1852, many of the poems which compose the present volume have already appeared. The rest are now published for the first time.

I have, in the present collection, omitted the poem from which the volume published in 1852 took its title.[1] I have done so, not because the subject of it was a Sicilian Greek born between two and three thousand years ago, although many persons would think this a sufficient reason. Neither have I done so because I had, in my own opinion, failed in the delineation which I intended to effect. I intended to delineate the feelings of one of the last of the Greek religious philosophers, one of the family of Orpheus and Musaeus,[2] having survived his fellows, living on into a time when the habits of Greek thought and feeling had begun fast to change, character to dwindle, the influence of the Sophists[3] to prevail. Into the feelings of a man so situated there entered much that we are accustomed to consider as exclusively modern; how much, the fragments of Empedocles[4] himself which remain to us are sufficient at least to indicate. What those who are familiar only with the great monuments of early Greek genius suppose to be its exclusive characteristics, have disappeared; the calm, the cheerfulness, the disinterested objectivity have disappeared; the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced; modern problems have presented themselves, we hear already the doubts, we witness the discouragement, of Hamlet and of Faust.[5]

The representation of such a man's feelings must be interesting, if consistently drawn. We all naturally take pleasure, says Aristotle, in any imitation or representation whatever;[6] this is the basis of our love of poetry; and we take pleasure in them, he adds, because all knowledge is naturally agreeable to us; not to the philosopher only,

but to mankind at large. Every representation therefore which is consistently drawn may be supposed to be interesting, inasmuch as it gratifies this natural interest in knowledge of all kinds. What is *not* interesting is that which does not add to our knowledge of any kind; that which is vaguely conceived and loosely drawn; a representation which is general, indeterminate, and faint, instead of being particular, precise, and firm.

Any accurate representation may therefore be expected to be interesting; but, if the representation be a poetical one, more than this is demanded. It is demanded, not only that it shall interest, but also that it shall inspirit and rejoice the reader; that it shall convey a charm, and infuse delight. For the muses, as Hesiod says, were born that they might be "a forgetfulness of evils, and a truce from cares":[7] and it is not enough that the poet should add to the knowledge of men, it is required of him also that he should add to their happiness. "All art," says Schiller, "is dedicated to Joy, and there is no higher and no more serious problem, than how to make men happy. The right art is that alone, which creates the highest enjoyment."[8]

A poetical work, therefore, is not yet justified when it has been shown to be an accurate, and therefore interesting representation; it has to be shown also that it is a representation from which men can derive enjoyment. In presence of the most tragic circumstances, represented in a work of Art, the feeling of enjoyment, as is well known, may still subsist; the representation of the most utter calamity, of the liveliest anguish, is not sufficient to destroy it; the more tragic the situation, the deeper becomes the enjoyment; and the situation is more tragic in proportion as it becomes more terrible.

What then are the situations, from the representation of which, though accurate, no poetical enjoyment can be derived? They are those in which the suffering finds no vent in action; in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance; in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done. In such situations there is inevitably something morbid, in the description of them something

monotonous. When they occur in actual life, they are painful, not tragic; the representation of them in poetry is painful also.

To this class of situations, poetically faulty as it appears to me, that of Empedocles, as I have endeavored to represent him, belongs; and I have therefore excluded the poem from the present collection.

And why, it may be asked, have I entered into this explanation respecting a matter so unimportant as the admission or exclusion of the poem in question? I have done so, because I was anxious to avow that the sole reason for its exclusion was that which has been stated above; and that it has not been excluded in deference to the opinion which many critics of the present day appear to entertain against subjects chosen from distant times and countries: against the choice, in short, of any subjects but modern ones.

"The poet," it is said, and by an intelligent critic, "the poet who would really fix the public attention must leave the exhausted past, and draw his subjects from matters of present import, and *therefore* both of interest and novelty."[9]

Now this view I believe to be completely false. It is worth examining, inasmuch as it is a fair sample of a class of critical dicta everywhere current at the present day, having a philosophical form and air, but no real basis in fact; and which are calculated to vitiate the judgment of readers of poetry, while they exert, so far as they are adopted, a misleading influence on the practice of those who write it.

What are the eternal objects of poetry, among all nations and at all times? They are actions; human actions; possessing an inherent interest in themselves, and which are to be communicated in an interesting manner by the art of the poet.[1] Vainly will the latter imagine that he has everything in his own power; that he can make an intrinsically inferior action equally delightful with a more excellent one by his treatment of it; he may indeed compel us to admire his skill, but his work will possess, within itself, an incurable defect.

The poet, then, has in the first place to select an excellent action; and what actions are the most excellent? Those, certainly,

which most powerfully appeal to the great primary human affections: to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of time. These feelings are permanent and the same; that which interests them is permanent and the same also. The modernness or antiquity of an action, therefore, has nothing to do with its fitness for poetical representation; this depends upon its inherent qualities. To the elementary part of our nature, to our passions, that which is great and passionate is eternally interesting; and interesting solely in proportion to its greatness and to its passion. A great human action of a thousand years ago is more interesting to it than a smaller human action of today, even though upon the representation of this last the most consummate skill may have been expended, and though it has the advantage of appealing by its modern language, familiar manners, and contemporary allusions, to all our transient feelings and interests. These, however, have no right to demand of a poetical work that it shall satisfy them; their claims are to be directed elsewhere. Poetical works belong to the domain of our permanent passions; let them interest these, and the voice of all subordinate claims upon them is at once silenced.

Achilles, Prometheus, Clytemnestra, Dido—what modern poem presents personages as interesting, even to us moderns, as these personages of an "exhausted past"? We have the domestic epic dealing with the details of modern life which pass daily under our eyes;[2] we have poems representing modern personages in contact with the problems of modern life, moral, intellectual, and social; these works have been produced by poets the most distinguished of their nation and time; yet I fearlessly assert that *Hermann and Dorothea, Childe Harold, Jocelyn, The Excursion,*[3] leave the reader cold in comparison with the effect produced upon him by the latter books of the *Iliad,* by the *Oresteia,* or by the episode of Dido.[4] And why is this? Simply because in the three last-named cases the action is greater, the personages nobler, the situations more intense: and this is the true basis of the interest in a poetical work, and this alone.

It may be urged, however, that past actions may be interesting in themselves, but that they are not to be adopted by the modern poet, because it is impossible for him to have them clearly present to his own mind, and he cannot therefore feel them deeply, nor represent them forcibly. But this is not necessarily the case. The externals of a past action, indeed, he cannot know with the precision of a contemporary; but his business is with its essentials. The outward man of Oedipus or of Macbeth, the houses in which they lived, the ceremonies of their courts, he cannot accurately figure to himself; but neither do they essentially concern him. His business is with their inward man; with their feelings and behavior in certain tragic situations, which engage their passions as men; these have in them nothing local and casual; they are as accessible to the modern poet as to a contemporary.

The date of an action, then, signifies nothing: the action itself, its selection and construction, this is what is all-important. This the Greeks understood far more clearly than we do. The radical difference between their poetical theory and ours consists, as it appears to me, in this: that, with them, the poetical character of the action in itself, and the conduct of it, was the first consideration; with us, attention is fixed mainly on the value of the separate thoughts and images which occur in the treatment of an action. They regarded the whole; we regard the parts. With them, the action predominated over the expression of it; with us, the expression predominates over the action. Not that they failed in expression, or were inattentive to it; on the contrary, they are the highest models of expression, the unapproached masters of the *grand style:* but their expression is so excellent because it is so admirably kept in its right degree of prominence; because it is so simple and so well subordinated; because it draws its force directly from the pregnancy of the matter which it conveys. For what reason was the Greek tragic poet confined to so limited a range of subjects? Because there are so few actions which unite in themselves, in the highest degree, the conditions of excellence: and it was not thought that on any but an excellent subject could an excellent poem be

constructed. A few actions, therefore, eminently adapted for tragedy, maintained almost exclusive possession of the Greek tragic stage; their significance appeared inexhaustible; they were as permanent problems, perpetually offered to the genius of every fresh poet. This too is the reason of what appears to us moderns a certain baldness of expression in Greek tragedy; of the triviality with which we often reproach the remarks of the chorus, where it takes part in the dialogue: that the action itself, the situation of Orestes, or Merope, or Alcmaeon,[5] was to stand the central point of interest, unforgotten, absorbing, principal; that no accessories were for a moment to distract the spectator's attention from this; that the tone of the parts was to be perpetually kept down, in order not to impair the grandiose effect of the whole. The terrible[6] old mythic story on which the drama was founded stood, before he entered the theater, traced in its bare outlines upon the spectator's mind; it stood in his memory, as a group of statuary, faintly seen, at the end of a long and dark vista: then came the poet, embodying outlines, developing situations, not a word wasted, not a sentiment capriciously thrown in: stroke upon stroke, the drama proceeded: the light deepened upon the group; more and more it revealed itself to the riveted gaze of the spectator: until at last, when the final words were spoken, it stood before him in broad sunlight, a model of immortal beauty.

This was what a Greek critic demanded; this was what a Greek poet endeavored to effect. It signified nothing to what time an action belonged; we do not find that the *Persae* occupied a particularly high rank among the dramas of Aeschylus, because it represented a matter of contemporary interest:[7] this was not what a cultivated Athenian required, he required that the permanent elements of his nature should be moved; and dramas of which the action, though taken from a long-distant mythic time, yet was calculated to accomplish this in a higher degree than that of the *Persae,* stood higher in his estimation accordingly. The Greeks felt, no doubt, with their exquisite sagacity of taste, that an action of present times was too near them, too much mixed up with what was accidental and passing, to form a sufficiently grand, detached, and

self-subsistent object for a tragic poem: such objects belonged to the domain of the comic poet, and of the lighter kinds of poetry. For the more serious kinds, for *pragmatic* poetry, to use an excellent expression of Polybius,[8] they were more difficult and severe in the range of subjects which they permitted. Their theory and practice alike, the admirable treatise of Aristotle, and the unrivaled works of their poets, exclaim with a thousand tongues—"All depends upon the subject; choose a fitting action, penetrate yourself with the feeling of its situations; this done, everything else will follow."

But for all kinds of poetry alike there was one point on which they were rigidly exacting; the adaptability of the subject to the kind of poetry selected, and the careful construction of the poem.

How different a way of thinking from this is ours! We can hardly at the present day understand what Menander[9] meant when he told a man who inquired as to the progress of his comedy that he had finished it, not having yet written a single line, because he had constructed the action of it in his mind. A modern critic would have assured him that the merit of his piece depended on the brilliant things which arose under his pen as he went along. We have poems which seem to exist merely for the sake of single lines and passages; not for the sake of producing any total impression. We have critics who seem to direct their attention merely to detached expressions, to the language about the action, not to the action itself, I verily think that the majority of them do not in their hearts believe that there is such a thing as a total impression to be derived from a poem at all, or to be demanded from a poet; they think the term a commonplace of metaphysical criticism. They will permit the poet to select any action he pleases, and to suffer that action to go as it will, provided he gratifies them with occasional bursts of fine writing, and with a shower of isolated thoughts and images. That is, they permit him to leave their poetical sense ungratified, provided that he gratifies their rhetorical sense and their curiosity. Of his neglecting to gratify these, there is little danger. He needs rather to be warned against the danger of attempting to gratify these alone; he needs rather to be perpetually reminded to prefer his action to everything

else; so to treat this, as to permit its inherent excellences to develop themselves, without interruption from the intrusion of his personal peculiarities; most fortunate, when he most entirely succeeds in effacing himself, and in enabling a noble action to subsist as it did in nature.

But the modern critic not only permits a false practice; he absolutely prescribes false aims.—"A true allegory of the state of one's own mind in a representative history," the poet is told, "is perhaps the highest thing that one can attempt in the way of poetry."[1] And accordingly he attempts it. An allegory of the state of one's own mind, the highest problem of an art which imitates actions! No assuredly, it is not, it never can be so: no great poetical work has ever been produced with such an aim. *Faust* itself, in which something of the kind is attempted, wonderful passages as it contains, and in spite of the unsurpassed beauty of the scenes which relate to Margaret, *Faust* itself, judged as a whole, and judged strictly as a poetical work, is defective: its illustrious author, the greatest poet of modern times, the greatest critic of all times, would have been the first to acknowledge it; he only defended his work, indeed, by asserting it to be "something incommensurable."[2]

The confusion of the present times is great, the multitude of voices counseling different things bewildering, the number of existing works capable of attracting a young writer's attention and of becoming his models, immense. What he wants is a hand to guide him through the confusion, a voice to prescribe to him the aim which he should keep in view, and to explain to him that the value of the literary works which offer themselves to his attention is relative to their power of helping him forward on his road towards this aim. Such a guide the English writer at the present day will nowhere find. Failing this, all that can be looked for, all indeed that can be desired is, that his attention should be fixed on excellent models; that he may reproduce, at any rate, something of their excellence, by penetrating himself with their works and by catching their spirit, if he cannot be taught to produce what is excellent independently.

Foremost among these models for the English writer stands Shakespeare: a name the greatest perhaps of all poetical names; a name never to be mentioned without reverence. I will venture, however, to express a doubt, whether the influence of his works, excellent and fruitful for the readers of poetry, for the great majority, has been of unmixed advantage to the writers of it. Shakespeare indeed chose excellent subjects; the world could afford no better than Macbeth, or Romeo and Juliet, or Othello: he had no theory respecting the necessity of choosing subjects of present import, or the paramount interest attaching to allegories of the state of one's own mind; like all great poets, he knew well what constituted a poetical action; like them, wherever he found such an action, he took it; like them, too, he found his best in past times. But to these general characteristics of all great poets he added a special one of his own; a gift, namely, of happy, abundant, and ingenious expression, eminent and unrivaled: so eminent as irresistibly to strike the attention first in him, and even to throw into comparative shade his other excellences as a poet. Here has been the mischief. These other excellences were his fundamental excellences *as a poet;* what distinguishes the artist from the mere amateur, says Goethe, is *Architectonicè* in the highest sense;[3] that power of execution, which creates, forms, and constitutes: not the profoundness of single thoughts, not the richness of imagery, not the abundance of illustration. But these attractive accessories of a poetical work being more easily seized than the spirit of the whole, and these accessories being possessed by Shakespeare in an unequaled degree, a young writer having recourse to Shakespeare as his model runs great risk of being vanquished and absorbed by them, and, in consequence, of reproducing, according to the measure of his power, these, and these alone.[4] Of this preponderating quality of Shakespeare's genius, accordingly almost the whole of modern English poetry has, it appears to me, felt the influence. To the exclusive attention on the part of his imitators to this it is in a great degree owing, that of the majority of modern poetical works the details alone are valuable, the composition worthless. In reading

them one is perpetually reminded of that terrible sentence on a modern French poet: *Il dit tout ce qu'il veut, mais malheureusement il n'a rien à dire.*[5]

Let me give an instance of what I mean. I will take it from the works of the very chief among those who seem to have been formed in the school of Shakespeare: of one whose exquisite genius and pathetic death render him forever interesting. I will take the poem of *Isabella, or the Pot of Basil*, by Keats. I choose this rather than the *Endymion,* because the latter work (which a modern critic has classed with the *Fairy Queen*!)[6] although undoubtedly there blows through it the breath of genius, is yet as a whole so utterly incoherent, as not strictly to merit the name of a poem at all. The poem of *Isabella,* then, is a perfect treasure house of graceful and felicitous words and images: almost in every stanza there occurs one of those vivid and picturesque turns of expression, by which the object is made to flash upon the eye of the mind, and which thrill the reader with a sudden delight. This one short poem contains, perhaps, a greater number of happy[7] single expressions which one could quote than all the extant tragedies of Sophocles. But the action, the story? The action in itself is an excellent one; but so feebly is it conceived by the poet, so loosely constructed, that the effect produced by it, in and for itself, is absolutely null. Let the reader, after he has finished the poem of Keats, turn to the same story in the *Decameron*:[8] he will then feel how pregnant and interesting the same action has become in the hands of a great artist, who above all things delineates his object; who subordinates expression to that which it is designed to express.

I have said that the imitators of Shakespeare, fixing their attention on his wonderful gift of expression, have directed their imitation to this, neglecting his other excellences. These excellences, the fundamental excellences of poetical art, Shakespeare no doubt possessed them—possessed many of them in a splendid degree; but it may perhaps be doubted whether even he himself did not sometimes give scope to his faculty of expression to the prejudice of a higher poetical duty. For we must never forget that Shakespeare is

the great poet he is from his skill in discerning and firmly conceiving an excellent action, from his power of intensely feeling a situation, of intimately associating himself with a character; not from his gift of expression, which rather even leads him astray, degenerating sometimes into a fondness for curiosity of expression, into an irritability of fancy, which seems to make it impossible for him to say a thing plainly, even when the press of the action demands the very direct language, or its level character the very simplest. Mr. Hallam, than whom it is impossible to find a saner and more judicious critic, has had the courage (for at the present day it needs courage) to remark, how extremely and faultily difficult Shakespeare's language often is.[9] It is so: you may find main scenes in some of his greatest tragedies, *King Lear* for instance, where the language is so artificial, so curiously tortured, and so difficult, that every speech has to be read two or three times before its meaning can be comprehended. This overcuriousness of expression is indeed but the excessive employment of a wonderful gift—of the power of saying a thing in a happier way than any other man; nevertheless, it is carried so far that one understands what M. Guizot meant, when he said that Shakespeare appears in his language to have tried all styles except that of simplicity.[1] He has not the severe and scrupulous self-restraint of the ancients, partly no doubt, because he had a far less cultivated and exacting audience. He has indeed a far wider range than they had, a far richer fertility of thought; in this respect he rises above them. In his strong conception of his subject, in the genuine way in which he is penetrated with it, he resembles them, and is unlike the moderns. But in the accurate limitation of it, the conscientious rejection of superfluities, the simple and rigorous development of it from the first line of his work to the last, he falls below them, and comes nearer to the moderns. In his chief works, besides what he has of his own, he has the elementary soundness of the ancients; he has their important action and their large and broad manner; but he has not their purity of method. He is therefore a less safe model; for what he has of his own is personal, and inseparable from his own rich nature; it may be imitated and exaggerated, it

cannot be learned or applied as an art. He is above all suggestive; more valuable, therefore, to young writers as men than as artists. But clearness of arrangement, rigor of development, simplicity of style—these may to a certain extent be learned; and these may, I am convinced, be learned best from the ancients, who although infinitely less suggestive than Shakespeare, are thus, to the artist, more instructive.

What, then, it will be asked, are the ancients to be our sole models? the ancients with their comparatively narrow range of experience, and their widely different circumstances? Not, certainly, that which is narrow in the ancients, nor that in which we can no longer sympathize. An action like the action of the *Antigone* of Sophocles, which turns upon the conflict between the heroine's duty to her brother's corpse and that to the laws of her country, is no longer one in which it is possible that we should feel a deep interest. I am speaking too, it will be remembered, not of the best sources of intellectual stimulus for the general reader, but of the best models of instruction for the individual writer. This last may certainly learn of the ancients, better than anywhere else, three things which it is vitally important for him to know: the all-importance of the choice of a subject; the necessity of accurate construction; and the subordinate character of expression. He will learn from them how unspeakably superior is the effect of the one moral impression left by a great action treated as a whole, to the effect produced by the most striking single thought or by the happiest image. As he penetrates into the spirit of the great classical works, as he becomes gradually aware of their intense significance, their noble simplicity, and their calm pathos, he will be convinced that it is this effect, unity and profoundness of moral impression, at which the ancient poets aimed; that it is this which constitutes the grandeur of their works, and which makes them immortal. He will desire to direct his own efforts towards producing the same effect. Above all, he will deliver himself from the jargon of modern criticism, and escape the danger of producing poetical works conceived in the spirit of the passing time, and which partake of its transitoriness.

The present age makes great claims upon us; we owe it service, it will not be satisfied without our admiration. I know not how it is, but their commerce with the ancients appears to me to produce, in those who constantly practice it, a steadying and composing effect upon their judgment, not of literary works only, but of men and events in general. They are like persons who have had a very weighty and impressive experience; they are more truly than others under the empire of facts, and more independent of the language current among those with whom they live. They wish neither to applaud nor to revile their age; they wish to know what it is, what it can give them, and whether this is what they want. What they want, they know very well; they want to educe and cultivate what is best and noblest in themselves; they know, too, that this is no easy task —*χαλεπόν*, as Pittacus said, *χαλεπὸν ἐσθλὸν ἔμμεναι*[2]—and they ask themselves sincerely whether their age and its literature can assist them in the attempt. If they are endeavoring to practice any art, they remember the plain and simple proceedings of the old artists, who attained their grand results by penetrating themselves with some noble and significant action, not by inflating themselves with a belief in the pre-eminent importance and greatness of their own times. They do not talk of their mission, nor of interpreting their age, nor of the coming poet; all this, they know, is the mere delirium of vanity; their business is not to praise their age, but to afford to the men who live in it the highest pleasure which they are capable of feeling. If asked to afford this by means of subjects drawn from the age itself, they ask what special fitness the present age has for supplying them. They are told that it is an era of progress, an age commissioned to carry out the great ideas of industrial development and social amelioration. They reply that with all this they can do nothing; that the elements they need for the exercise of their art are great actions, calculated powerfully and delightfully to affect what is permanent in the human soul; that so far as the present age can supply such actions, they will gladly make use of them; but that an age wanting in moral grandeur can with difficulty supply such, and

an age of spiritual discomfort with difficulty be powerfully and delightfully affected by them.

A host of voices will indignantly rejoin that the present age is inferior to the past neither in moral grandeur nor in spiritual health. He who possesses the discipline I speak of will content himself with remembering the judgments passed upon the present age, in this respect, by the two men, the one of strongest head, the other of widest culture, whom it has produced; by Goethe and by Niebuhr.[3] It will be sufficient for him that he knows the opinions held by these two great men respecting the present age and its literature; and that he feels assured in his own mind that their aims and demands upon life were such as he would wish, at any rate, his own to be; and their judgment as to what is impeding and disabling such as he may safely follow. He will not, however, maintain a hostile attitude towards the false pretensions of his age: he will content himself with not being overwhelmed by them. He will esteem himself fortunate if he can succeed in banishing from his mind all feelings of contradiction, and irritation, and impatience; in order to delight himself with the contemplation of some noble action of a heroic time, and to enable others, through his representation of it, to delight in it also.

I am far indeed from making any claim, for myself, that I possess this discipline; or for the following poems, that they breathe its spirit. But I say, that in the sincere endeavor to learn and practice, amid the bewildering confusion of our times, what is sound and true in poetical art, I seemed to myself to find the only sure guidance, the only solid footing, among the ancients. They, at any rate, knew what they wanted in art, and we do not. It is this uncertainty which is disheartening, and not hostile criticism. How often have I felt this when reading words of disparagement or of cavil: that it is the uncertainty as to what is really to be aimed at which makes our difficulty, not the dissatisfaction of the critic, who himself suffers from the same uncertainty. *Non me tua fervida terrent Dicta; . . . Dii me terrent, et Jupiter hostis.*[4]

Two kinds of *dilettanti,* says Goethe, there are in poetry: he who neglects the indispensable mechanical part, and thinks he has done enough if he shows spirituality and feeling; and he who seeks to arrive at poetry merely by mechanism, in which he can acquire an artisan's readiness, and is without soul and matter.[5] And he adds, that the first does most harm to art, and the last to himself. If we must be *dilettanti*; if it is impossible for us, under the circumstances amidst which we live, to think clearly, to feel nobly, and to delineate firmly; if we cannot attain to the mastery of the great artists; let us, at least, have so much respect for our art as to prefer it to ourselves. Let us not bewilder our successors; let us transmit to them the practice of poetry, with its boundaries and wholesome regulative laws, under which excellent works may again, perhaps, at some future time, be produced, not yet fallen into oblivion through our neglect, not yet condemned and canceled by the influence of their eternal enemy, caprice.

1853

Endnotes

- Note 1: *Empedocles on Etna,* the long poem that supplied the title for Arnold's second collection of poems, portrays the disillusioned reflections of the Greek philosopher and scientist Empedocles and culminates in the speaker's suicide on Mount Etna in Sicily, in the 5th century B.C.E. Because of his dissatisfaction with what he calls the "morbid" tone of *Empedocles on Etna,* Arnold continued to exclude it from his volumes of poetry until 1867, when he reprinted it at the request, he said, "of a man of genius, whom it had the honour and good fortune to interest—Mr. Robert Browning." It should be noted that in the arguments developed in the preface against his own poem (and against 19th-century poetry in general), Arnold is exclusively concerned with narrative and dramatic poetry. The preface, as he remarked in 1854, "leaves . . .

untouched the question, how far, and in what manner, the opinions there expressed respecting the choice of subjects apply to lyric poetry; that region of the poetical field which is chiefly cultivated at present."Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Pupil of the poet and musician Orpheus. The latter was the legendary founder of the Orphic religion that flourished in 6th-century B.C.E. Greece and later declined.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Greek rhetoricians, often criticized because of their reputed emphasis on winning arguments rather than on truth or knowledge.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Empedocles' writings (medical and scientific treatises in verse) have survived only in fragments.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Johann Faustus (ca. 1480–ca. 1540), a German teacher and magician who became the subject of many stories and folktales, and later the hero of the plays by Christopher Marlowe (1604) and Goethe (1808–32).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: See Aristotle's *Poetics,* especially 1, 2, 4, 7, 14.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: From *Theogony* 52–56, by the Greek poet Hesiod (ca. 700 B.C.E.).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: J. C. F. von Schiller's "On the Use of the Chorus in Tragedy," prefatory essay to *The Bride of Messina* (1803). Schiller (1759–1805), German poet, playwright, and critic; see *Friedrich Schiller's Works* (1903) 8.224.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: In the *Spectator* of April 2nd, 1853. The words quoted were not used with reference to poems of mine [*Arnold's note*]. According to Arnold, the "intelligent critic" was R. S. Rintoul, editor of the *Spectator.*Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Compare with Aristotle's *Poetics* 6.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Perhaps alluding to poems such as Tennyson's *The Princess* (1847) and Alexander Smith's *Life Drama* (1853) or to the modern novel.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Long poems by Goethe (1797), Byron (1818), Alphonse-Marie-Louis de Lamartine (1836), and William Wordsworth (1814), respectively.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: See Virgil's *Aeneid,* book 4. *Oresteia*: a trilogy of plays by Aeschylus that tells the story of Agamemnon's murder by his wife, Clytemnestra, and the vengeance taken by their son, Orestes.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The son of a legendary Greek hero, who, like Orestes, avenged his father's death by killing his mother. He was the subject of several Greek plays now lost. Merope, queen of Messene in Greece, appears in plays by Euripides and in Arnold's own play *Merope* (1858).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Terrifying, awe-inspiring.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Aeschylus's *Persians* (472 B.C.E.) portrays the Greek victory over the Persian invaders, which had occurred only a few years before the play was produced.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Greek historian (ca. 200–ca. 118 B.C.E.).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Greek writer of comedies (ca. 342–ca. 292 B.C.E.).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: *North British Review* 19 (August 1853): 180 (U.S. ed.). Arnold seems not to have noticed that Goethe (a critic he revered) had been cited earlier in the article as the authority for this critical generalization.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: J. Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe,* January 3, 1830.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In the essay "Concerning the So-called Dilettantism" (1799) in his *Werke* (1833) 44.262–63.Return to reference 3
- Note 4:
  Compare with Arnold's letter to Clough (October 28, 1852):

  > More and more I feel that the difference between a mature and a youthful age of the world compels the poetry of the former to use great plainness of speech . . . and that Keats and Shelley were on a false track when they set themselves to reproduce the exuberance of expression, the charm, the richness of images, and the felicity, of the Elizabethan poets.

Return to reference 4

- Note 5: He says everything he wishes to, but unfortunately he has nothing to say (French). A comment about Théophile Gautier (1811–1872), whose emphasis on style was severely criticized by Arnold in his late essay "Wordsworth" (1888).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In the *North British Review* 19 (August 1853): 172–74, John Keats's *Endymion* (1818) is twice linked with Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1590) as "leisurely compositions of the sweet sensuous order."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Well-judged, fitting.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: By Boccaccio (1353): fourth day, fifth story.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: *Introduction to the Literature of Europe* (1838–39), chap. 23, by the historian Henry Hallam (1779–1859).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: F. P. G. Guizot (1787–1874), French historian, discusses Shakespeare's sonnets in his *Shakespeare et Son Temps* (1852).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: It is hard to be good (Greek); an aphorism of the statesman and sage Pittacus (ca. 650–570 B.C.E.).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: B. G. Niebuhr (1776–1831), German historian. Both writers felt that their own age had added little to the store of great literature.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The gods frighten me, and [having] Jupiter as an enemy (Latin); Virgil's *Aeneid* 12.894–95. Turnus, a warrior abandoned by the gods, is replying to Aeneas, who has taunted him with being afraid.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: See "Concerning the So-called Dilettantism" (1799) in his *Werke* (1833), 44.281.Return to reference 5

From Culture and Anarchy[1]

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Arnold began *Culture and Anarchy* in the context of the turbulent political debate that preceded the passage of the second Reform Bill in 1867. The political climate seemed to some to threaten anarchy, to which Arnold opposed culture. A characteristic quality of the cultured state of mind is summed up, for his purposes, in his formula "sweetness and light," a phrase suggesting reasonableness of temper and intellectual insight. Arnold derived the phrase from a fable contrasting the spider with the bee in Jonathan Swift's *The Battle of the Books* (1704). The spider (representing a narrow, self-centered, and uncultured mind) spins out of itself "nothing at all but flybane and cobweb." The bee (representing a cultured mind that has drawn nourishment from the humanist tradition) ranges far and wide and makes in its hive honey and also wax out of which candles may be made. Therefore, the bee, Swift says, furnishes humankind "with the two noblest of things, which are sweetness and light."

  The selections printed here illustrate aspects of Arnold's indictment of the middle classes for their lack of sweetness and light. The first and third expose the narrowness and dullness of middle-class Puritan religious institutions in both the 17th and 19th centuries. The second, "Doing As One Likes," shows the limitations of the middle-class political bias and the irresponsibility of laissez-faire economics. Here Arnold is most close to Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin.
  Return to reference 1

From *Chapter 1. Sweetness and Light*

The impulse of the English race towards moral development and self-conquest has nowhere so powerfully manifested itself as in Puritanism. Nowhere has Puritanism found so adequate an expression as in the religious organization of the Independents.[2] The modern Independents have a newspaper, the *Nonconformist*, written with great sincerity and ability. The motto, the standard, the profession of faith which this organ of theirs carries aloft, is: "The Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion." There is sweetness and light, and an ideal of complete harmonious human perfection! One need not go to culture and poetry to find language to judge it. Religion, with its instinct for perfection, supplies language to judge it, language, too, which is in our mouths every day. "Finally, be of one mind, united in feeling," says St. Peter.[3] There is an ideal which judges the Puritan ideal: "The Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion!" And religious organizations like this are what people believe in, rest in, would give their lives for! Such, I say, is the wonderful virtue of even the beginnings of perfection, of having conquered even the plain faults of our animality, that the religious organization which has helped us to do it can seem to us something precious, salutary, and to be propagated, even when it wears such a brand of imperfection on its forehead as this. And men have got such a habit of giving to the language of religion a special application, of making it a mere jargon, that for the condemnation which religion itself passes on the shortcomings of their religious organizations they have no ear; they are sure to cheat themselves and to explain this condemnation away. They can only be reached by the criticism which culture, like poetry, speaking of language not to be sophisticated, and resolutely testing these organizations by the ideal of a human perfection complete on all sides, applies to them.

But men of culture and poetry, it will be said, are again and again failing, and failing conspicuously, in the necessary first stage to a harmonious perfection, in the subduing of the great obvious faults of

our animality, which it is the glory of these religious organizations to have helped us to subdue. True, they do often so fail. They have often been without the virtues as well as the faults of the Puritan; it has been one of their dangers that they so felt the Puritan's faults that they too much neglected the practice of his virtues. I will not, however, exculpate them at the Puritan's expense. They have often failed in morality, and morality is indispensable. And they have been punished for their failure, as the Puritan has been rewarded for his performance. They have been punished wherein they erred; but their ideal of beauty, of sweetness and light, and a human nature complete on all its sides, remains the true ideal of perfection still; just as the Puritan's ideal of perfection remains narrow and inadequate, although for what he did well he has been richly rewarded. Notwithstanding the mighty results of the Pilgrim Fathers' voyage, they and their standard of perfection are rightly judged when we figure to ourselves Shakespeare or Virgil[4]—souls in whom sweetness and light, and all that in human nature is most humane, were eminent—accompanying them on their voyage, and think what intolerable company Shakespeare and Virgil would have found them! In the same way let us judge the religious organizations which we see all around us. Do not let us deny the good and the happiness which they have accomplished; but do not let us fail to see clearly that their idea of human perfection is narrow and inadequate, and that the Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion will never bring humanity to its true goal. As I said with regard to wealth: Let us look at the life of those who live in and for it—so I say with regard to the religious organizations. Look at the life imaged in such a newspaper as the *Nonconformist*—a life of jealousy of the Establishment,[5] disputes, tea-meetings, openings of chapels, sermons; and then think of it as an ideal of a human life completing itself on all sides, and aspiring with all its organs after sweetness, light, and perfection!

Endnotes

- Note 2: A 17th-century Puritan group (of which Oliver Cromwell was an adherent), allied with the Congregationalists.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Compare with 1 Peter 3:8.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Roman poet (70–19 B.C.E.).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The Church of England or the Established Church.Return to reference 5

From *Chapter 2. Doing As One Likes*

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When I began to speak of culture, I insisted on our bondage to machinery,[6] on our proneness to value machinery as an end in itself, without looking beyond it to the end for which alone, in truth, it is valuable. Freedom, I said, was one of those things which we thus worshiped in itself, without enough regarding the ends for which freedom is to be desired. In our common notions and talk about freedom, we eminently show our idolatry of machinery. Our prevalent notion is—and I quoted a number of instances to prove it—that it is a most happy and important thing for a man merely to be able to do as he likes. On what he is to do when he is thus free to do as he likes, we do not lay so much stress. Our familiar praise of the British Constitution under which we live, is that it is a system of checks—a system which stops and paralyzes any power in interfering with the free action of individuals. To this effect Mr. Bright,[7] who loves to walk in the old ways of the Constitution, said forcibly in one of his great speeches, what many other people are every day saying less forcibly, that the central idea of English life and politics is *the assertion of personal liberty.* Evidently this is so; but evidently, also, as feudalism, which with its ideas, and habits of subordination was for many centuries silently behind the British Constitution, dies out, and we are left with nothing but our system of checks, and our notion of its being the great right and happiness of an Englishman to do as far as possible what he likes, we are in danger of drifting towards anarchy. We have not the notion, so familiar on the Continent and to antiquity, of *the State*—the nation in its collective and corporate character, entrusted with stringent powers for the general advantage, and controlling individual wills in the name of an interest wider than that of individuals. We say, what is very true, that this notion is often made instrumental to tyranny; we say that a State is in reality made up of the individuals who compose it, and

that every individual is the best judge of his own interests. Our leading class is an aristocracy, and no aristocracy likes the notion of a State-authority greater than itself, with a stringent administrative machinery superseding the decorative inutilities of lord-lieutenancy, deputy-lieutenancy, and the *posse comitatus*,[8] which are all in its own hands. Our middle class, the great representative of trade and Dissent, with its maxims of every man for himself in business, every man for himself in religion, dreads a powerful administration which might somehow interfere with it; and besides, it has its own decorative inutilities of vestrymanship[9] and guardianship, which are to this class what lord-lieutenancy and the county magistracy are to the aristocratic class, and a stringent administration might either take these functions out of its hands, or prevent its exercising them in its own comfortable, independent manner, as at present.

Then as to our working class. This class, pressed constantly by the hard daily compulsion of material wants, is naturally the very center and stronghold of our national idea, that it is man's ideal right and felicity to do as he likes. I think I have somewhere related how M. Michelet[1] said to me of the people of France, that it was "a nation of barbarians civilized by the conscription." He meant that through their military service the idea of public duty and of discipline was brought to the mind of these masses, in other respects so raw and uncultivated. Our masses are quite as raw and uncultivated as the French; and so far from their having the idea of public duty and of discipline, superior to the individual's self-will, brought to their mind by a universal obligation of military service, such as that of the conscription—so far from their having this, the very idea of a conscription is so at variance with our English notion of the prime right and blessedness of doing as one likes, that I remember the manager of the Clay Cross works in Derbyshire told me during the Crimean war,[2] when our want of soldiers was much felt and some people were talking of a conscription, that sooner than submit to a conscription the population of that district would flee to the mines, and lead a sort of Robin Hood life underground.

For a long time, as I have said, the strong feudal habits of subordination and deference continued to tell upon the working class. The modern spirit has now almost entirely dissolved those habits, and the anarchical tendency of our worship of freedom in and for itself, of our superstitious faith, as I say, in machinery, is becoming very manifest. More and more, because of this our blind faith in machinery, because of our want of light to enable us to look beyond machinery to the end for which machinery is valuable, this and that man, and this and that body of men, all over the country, are beginning to assert and put in practice an Englishman's right to do what he likes; his right to march where he likes, meet where he likes, enter where he likes, hoot as he likes, threaten as he likes, smash as he likes.[3] All this, I say, tends to anarchy; and though a number of excellent people, and particularly my friends of the Liberal or progressive party, as they call themselves, are kind enough to reassure us by saying that these are trifles, that a few transient outbreaks of rowdyism signify nothing, that our system of liberty is one which itself cures all the evils which it works, that the educated and intelligent classes stand in overwhelming strength and majestic repose, ready, like our military force in riots, to act at a moment's notice—yet one finds that one's Liberal friends generally say this because they have such faith in themselves and their nostrums, when they shall return, as the public welfare requires, to place and power. But this faith of theirs one cannot exactly share, when one has so long had them and their nostrums at work, and see that they have not prevented our coming to our present embarrassed condition. And one finds, also, that the outbreaks of rowdyism tend to become less and less of trifles, to become more frequent rather than less frequent; and that meanwhile our educated and intelligent classes remain in their majestic repose, and somehow or other, whatever happens, their overwhelming strength, like our military force in riots, never does act.

How indeed, *should* their overwhelming strength act, when the man who gives an inflammatory lecture, or breaks down the park railings, or invades a Secretary of State's office, is only following an

Englishman's impulse to do as he likes; and our own conscience tells us that we ourselves have always regarded this impulse as something primary and sacred? Mr. Murphy[4] lectures at Birmingham, and showers on the Catholic population of that town "words," says the Home Secretary, "only fit to be addressed to thieves or murderers." What then? Mr. Murphy has his own reasons of several kinds. He suspects the Roman Catholic Church of designs upon Mrs. Murphy; and he says if mayors and magistrates do not care for their wives and daughters, he does. But, above all, he is doing as he likes; or, in worthier language, asserting his personal liberty. "I will carry out my lectures if they walk over my body as a dead corpse, and I say to the Mayor of Birmingham that he is my servant while I am in Birmingham, and as my servant he must do his duty and protect me." Touching and beautiful words, which find a sympathetic chord in every British bosom! The moment it is plainly put before us that a man is asserting his personal liberty, we are half disarmed; because we are believers in freedom, and not in some dream of a right reason to which the assertion of our freedom is to be subordinated. Accordingly, the Secretary of State had to say that although the lecturer's language was "only fit to be addressed to thieves or murderers," yet, "I do not think he is to be deprived, I do not think that anything I have said could justify the inference that he is to be deprived, of the right of protection in a place built by him for the purpose of these lectures; because the language was not language which afforded grounds for a criminal prosecution." No, nor to be silenced by Mayor, or Home Secretary, or any administrative authority on earth, simply on their notion of what is discreet and reasonable! This is in perfect consonance with our public opinion, and with our national love for the assertion of personal liberty.

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Endnotes

- Note 6: Arnold uses this word to signify systems of operation and organization, not mechanized apparatus.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: John Bright (1811–1889), self-made businessman who became a noted orator and politician.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Power of the county (Latin); a feudal method of enforcing law by local authorities instead of by agencies of the central government.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A vestryman is an appointed member on a local church council.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Jules Michelet (1798–1874), French historian.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A war (1854–56) in which Britain joined France, Sardinia, and Turkey in fighting against Russia in Ukraine.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A reference to the riots of 1866 in which a London mob demolished the iron railings enclosing Hyde Park.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: An orator whose inflammatory anti-Catholic public speech "The Errors of the Roman Church" led to rioting in Birmingham and other cities in 1867.Return to reference 4

From *Chapter 5. Porro Unum Est Necessarium*[5]

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Sweetness and light evidently have to do with the bent or side in humanity which we call Hellenic. Greek intelligence has obviously for its essence the instinct for what Plato[6] calls the true, firm, intelligible law of things; the law of light, of seeing things as they are. Even in the natural sciences, where the Greeks had not time and means adequately to apply this instinct, and where we have gone a great deal further than they did, it is this instinct which is the root of the whole matter and the ground of all our success; and this instinct the world has mainly learnt of the Greeks, inasmuch as they are humanity's most signal manifestation of it. Greek art, again, Greek beauty, have their root in the same impulse to see things as they really are, inasmuch as Greek art and beauty rest on fidelity to nature—the *best* nature—and on a delicate discrimination of what this best nature is. To say we work for sweetness and light, then, is only another way of saying that we work for Hellenism. But, oh! cry many people, sweetness and light are not enough; you must put strength or energy along with them, and make a kind of trinity of strength, sweetness and light, and then, perhaps, you may do some good. That is to say, we are to join Hebraism, strictness of the moral conscience, and manful walking by the best light we have, together with Hellenism, inculcate both, and rehearse[7] the praises of both.

Or, rather, we may praise both in conjunction, but we must be careful to praise Hebraism most. "Culture," says an acute, though somewhat rigid critic, Mr. Sidgwick,[8] "diffuses sweetness and light. I do not undervalue these blessings, but religion gives fire and strength, and the world wants[9] fire and strength even more than sweetness and light." By religion, let me explain, Mr. Sidgwick here means particularly that Puritanism on the insufficiency of which I have been commenting and to which he says I am unfair. Now, no doubt, it is possible to be a fanatical partisan of light and the

instincts which push us to it, a fanatical enemy of strictness of moral conscience and the instincts which push us to it. A fanaticism of this sort deforms and vulgarizes the well-known work, in some respects so remarkable, of the late Mr. Buckle.[1] Such a fanaticism carries its own mark with it, in lacking sweetness; and its own penalty, in that, lacking sweetness, it comes in the end to lack light too. And the Greeks—the great exponents of humanity's bent for sweetness and light united, of its perception that the truth of things must be at the same time beauty—singularly escaped the fanaticism which we moderns, whether we Hellenize or whether we Hebraize, are so apt to show. They arrived—though failing, as has been said, to give adequate practical satisfaction to the claims of man's moral side—at the idea of a comprehensive adjustment of the claims of both the sides in man, the moral as well as the intellectual, of a full estimate of both, and of a reconciliation of both; an idea which is philosophically of the greatest value, and the best of lessons for us moderns. So we ought to have no difficulty in conceding to Mr. Sidgwick that manful walking by the best light one has—fire and strength as he calls it—has its high value as well as culture, the endeavor to see things in their truth and beauty, the pursuit of sweetness and light. But whether at this or that time, and to this or that set of persons, one ought to insist most on the praises of fire and strength, or on the praises of sweetness and light, must depend, one would think, on the circumstances and needs of that particular time and those particular persons. And all that we have been saying, and indeed any glance at the world around us, shows that with us, with the most respectable and strongest part of us, the ruling force is now, and long has been, a Puritan force—the care for fire and strength, strictness of conscience, Hebraism, rather than the care for sweetness and light, spontaneity of consciousness, Hellenism.

Well, then, what is the good of our now rehearsing the praises of fire and strength to ourselves, who dwell too exclusively on them already? When Mr. Sidgwick says so broadly, that the world wants fire and strength even more than sweetness and light, is he not carried away by a turn for broad generalization? does he not forget

that the world is not all of one piece, and every piece with the same needs at the same time? It may be true that the Roman world at the beginning of our era, or Leo the Tenth's Court at the time of the Reformation, or French society in the eighteenth century,[2] needed fire and strength even more than sweetness and light. But can it be said that the Barbarians who overran the empire needed fire and strength even more than sweetness and light; or that the Puritans needed them more; or that Mr. Murphy, the Birmingham lecturer, and the Rev. W. Cattle[3] and his friends, need them more?

The Puritan's great danger is that he imagines himself in possession of a rule telling him the *unum necessarium,* or one thing needful, and that he then remains satisfied with a very crude conception of what this rule really is and what it tells him, thinks he has now knowledge and henceforth needs only to act, and, in this dangerous state of assurance and self-satisfaction, proceeds to give full swing to a number of the instincts of his ordinary self. Some of the instincts of his ordinary self he has, by the help of his rule of life, conquered; but others which he has not conquered by this help he is so far from perceiving to need subjugation, and to be instincts of an inferior self, that he even fancies it to be his right and duty, in virtue of having conquered a limited part of himself, to give unchecked swing to the remainder. He is, I say, a victim of Hebraism, of the tendency to cultivate strictness of conscience rather than spontaneity of consciousness. And what he wants is a larger conception of human nature, showing him the number of other points at which his nature must come to its best, besides the points which he himself knows and thinks of. There is no *unum necessarium,* or one thing needful, which can free human nature from the obligation of trying to come to its best at all these points. The real *unum necessarium* for us is to come to our best at all points. Instead of our "one thing needful," justifying in us vulgarity, hideousness, ignorance, violence—our vulgarity, hideousness, ignorance, violence, are really so many touchstones[4] which try our one thing needful, and which prove that in the state, at any rate, in which we ourselves have it, it is not all we want. And as the force

which encourages us to stand staunch and fast by the rule and ground we have is Hebraism, so the force which encourages us to go back upon this rule, and to try the very ground on which we appear to stand, is Hellenism—a turn for giving our consciousness free play and enlarging its range. And what I say is, not that Hellenism is always for everybody more wanted than Hebraism, but that for the Rev. W. Cattle at this particular moment, and for the great majority of us his fellow countrymen, it is more wanted.

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1868, 1869

Endnotes

- Note 5: But one thing is needful (Latin; Luke 10.42). This chapter develops a contrast established in chap. 4 between *Hebraism* (Puritan morality and energetic devotion to work) and *Hellenism* (cultivation of the aesthetic and intellectual understanding of life). The Puritan middle classes, according to Arnold, think that the "one thing needful" is the Hebraic form of virtue.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Greek philosopher (ca. 427–ca. 347 B.C.E.).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Repeat.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Henry Sidgwick (1838–1900), philosopher whose article on Arnold appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine* (Aug. 1867).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Lacks.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Henry Thomas Buckle (1821–1862), author of *A History of Civilization* (1857–61).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Societies representing an excess of sophisticated worldliness as at the courts of a Roman emperor such as Nero (54–68 C.E.) or of Pope Leo X (1513–21) or Louis XV (1715–74), respectively.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: A Nonconformist clergyman who was chairman of the anti-Catholic meeting addressed by Murphy in 1867 (see chap. 2, "Doing As One Likes," p. 587).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: For the importance to Arnold of the concept of the touchstone—a succinct instance or standard by which to judge other materials—see also "The Study of Poetry."Return to reference 4

Literature and Science[1]

Practical people talk with a smile of Plato and of his absolute ideas: and it is impossible to deny that Plato's ideas do often seem unpractical and unpracticable, and especially when one views them in connection with the life of a great work-a-day world like the United States. The necessary staple of the life of such a world Plato regards with disdain; handicraft and trade and the working professions he regards with disdain; but what becomes of the life of an industrial modern community if you take handicraft and trade and the working professions out of it? The base mechanic arts and handicrafts, says Plato, bring about a natural weakness in the principle of excellence in a man, so that he cannot govern the ignoble growths in him, but nurses them, and cannot understand fostering any other. Those who exercise such arts and trades, as they have their bodies, he says, marred by their vulgar businesses, so they have their souls, too, bowed and broken by them. And if one of these uncomely people has a mind to seek self-culture and philosophy, Plato compares him to a bald little tinker, who has scraped together money, and has got his release from service, and has had a bath, and bought a new coat, and is rigged out like a bridegroom about to marry the daughter of his master who has fallen into poor and helpless estate.[2]

Nor do the working professions fare any better than trade at the hands of Plato. He draws for us an inimitable picture of the working lawyer, and of his life of bondage; he shows how this bondage from his youth up has stunted and warped him, and made him small and crooked of soul, encompassing him with difficulties which he is not man enough to rely on justice and truth as means to encounter, but has recourse, for help out of them, to falsehood and wrong. And so, says Plato, this poor creature is bent and broken, and grows up from

boy to man without a particle of soundness in him, although exceedingly smart and clever in his own esteem.[3]

One cannot refuse to admire the artist who draws these pictures. But we say to ourselves that his ideas show the influence of a primitive and obsolete order of things, when the warrior caste and the priestly caste were alone in honor, and the humble work of the world was done by slaves. We have now changed all that; the modern majesty consists in work, as Emerson declares;[4] and in work, we may add, principally of such plain and dusty kind as the work of cultivators of the ground, handicraftsmen, men of trade and business, men of the working professions. Above all is this true in a great industrious community such as that of the United States.

Now education, many people go on to say, is still mainly governed by the ideas of men like Plato, who lived when the warrior caste and the priestly or philosophical class were alone in honor, and the really useful part of the community were slaves. It is an education fitted for persons of leisure in such a community. This education passed from Greece and Rome to the feudal communities of Europe, where also the warrior caste and the priestly caste were alone held in honor, and where the really useful and working part of the community, though not nominally slaves as in the pagan world, were practically not much better off than slaves, and not more seriously regarded. And how absurd it is, people end by saying, to inflict this education upon an industrious modern community, where very few indeed are persons of leisure, and the mass to be considered has not leisure, but is bound, for its own great good, and for the great good of the world at large, to plain labor and to industrial pursuits, and the education in question tends necessarily to make men dissatisfied with these pursuits and unfitted for them!

That is what is said. So far I must defend Plato, as to plead that his view of education and studies is in the general, as it seems to me, sound enough, and fitted for all sorts and conditions of men, whatever their pursuits may be. "An intelligent man," says Plato, "will prize those studies which result in his soul getting soberness, righteousness, and wisdom, and will less value the others."[5] I cannot

consider *that* a bad description of the aim of education, and of the motives which should govern us in the choice of studies, whether we are preparing ourselves for a hereditary seat in the English House of Lords or for the pork trade in Chicago.

Still I admit that Plato's world was not ours, that his scorn of trade and handicraft is fantastic,[6] that he had no conception of a great industrial community such as that of the United States, and that such a community must and will shape its education to suit its own needs. If the usual education handed down to it from the past does not suit it, it will certainly before long drop this and try another. The usual education in the past has been mainly literary. The question is whether the studies which were long supposed to be the best for all of us are practically the best now; whether others are not better. The tyranny of the past, many think, weighs on us injuriously in the predominance given to letters in education. The question is raised whether, to meet the needs of our modern life, the predominance ought not now to pass from letters to science; and naturally the question is nowhere raised with more energy than here in the United States. The design of abasing what is called "mere literary instruction and education," and of exalting what is called "sound, extensive, and practical scientific knowledge," is, in this intensely modern world of the United States, even more perhaps than in Europe, a very popular design, and makes great and rapid progress.

I am going to ask whether the present movement for ousting letters from their old predominance in education, and for transferring the predominance in education to the natural sciences, whether this brisk and flourishing movement ought to prevail, and whether it is likely that in the end it really will prevail. An objection may be raised which I will anticipate. My own studies have been almost wholly in letters, and my visits to the field of the natural sciences have been very slight and inadequate, although those sciences have always strongly moved my curiosity. A man of letters, it will perhaps be said, is not competent to discuss the comparative merits of letters and natural science as means of education. To this objection I reply, first

of all, that his incompetence, if he attempts the discussion but is really incompetent for it, will be abundantly visible; nobody will be taken in; he will have plenty of sharp observers and critics to save mankind from that danger. But the line I am going to follow is, as you will soon discover, so extremely simple, that perhaps it may be followed without failure even by one who for a more ambitious line of discussion would be quite incompetent.

Some of you may possibly remember a phrase of mine which has been the object of a good deal of comment; an observation to the effect that in our culture, the aim being *to know ourselves and the world*, we have, as the means to this end, *to know the best which has been thought and said in the world.*[7] A man of science, who is also an excellent writer and the very prince of debaters, Professor Huxley,[8] in a discourse at the opening of Sir Josiah Mason's college at Birmingham, laying hold of this phrase, expanded it by quoting some more words of mine, which are these: "The civilized world is to be regarded as now being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working to a common result; and whose members have for their proper outfit a knowledge of Greek, Roman, and Eastern antiquity, and of one another. Special local and temporary advantages being put out of account, that modern nation will in the intellectual and spiritual sphere make most progress, which most thoroughly carries out this program."

Now on my phrase, thus enlarged, Professor Huxley remarks that when I speak of the above-mentioned knowledge as enabling us to know ourselves and the world, I assert *literature* to contain the materials which suffice for thus making us know ourselves and the world. But it is not by any means clear, says he, that after having learnt all which ancient and modern literatures have to tell us, we have laid a sufficiently broad and deep foundation for that criticism of life, that knowledge of ourselves and the world, which constitutes culture. On the contrary, Professor Huxley declares that he finds himself "wholly unable to admit that either nations or individuals will really advance, if their outfit draws nothing from the stores of

physical science. An army without weapons of precision, and with no particular base of operations, might more hopefully enter upon a campaign on the Rhine, than a man, devoid of a knowledge of what physical science has done in the last century, upon a criticism of life."

This shows how needful it is for those who are to discuss any matter together, to have a common understanding as to the sense of the terms they employ—how needful, and how difficult. What Professor Huxley says, implies just the reproach which is so often brought against the study of belles-lettres, as they are called: that the study is an elegant one, but slight and ineffectual; a smattering of Greek and Latin and other ornamental things, of little use for anyone whose object is to get at truth, and to be a practical man. So, too, M. Renan[9] talks of the "superficial humanism" of a school course which treats us as if we were all going to be poets, writers, preachers, orators, and he opposes this humanism to positive science, or the critical search after truth. And there is always a tendency in those who are remonstrating against the predominance of letters in education, to understand by letters belles-lettres, and by belles-lettres a superficial humanism, the opposite of science or true knowledge.

But when we talk of knowing Greek and Roman antiquity, for instance, which is the knowledge people have called the humanities, I for my part mean a knowledge which is something more than a superficial humanism, mainly decorative. "I call all teaching *scientific,*" says Wolf,[1] the critic of Homer, "which is systematically laid out and followed up to its original sources. For example: a knowledge of classical antiquity is scientific when the remains of classical antiquity are correctly studied in the original languages." There can be no doubt that Wolf is perfectly right; that all learning is scientific which is systematically laid out and followed up to its original sources, and that a genuine humanism is scientific.

When I speak of knowing Greek and Roman antiquity, therefore, as a help to knowing ourselves and the world, I mean more than a knowledge of so much vocabulary, so much grammar, so many portions of authors in the Greek and Latin languages, I mean

knowing the Greeks and Romans, and their life and genius,[2] and what they were and did in the world; what we get from them, and what is its value. That, at least, is the ideal; and when we talk of endeavoring to know Greek and Roman antiquity, as a help to knowing ourselves and the world, we mean endeavoring so to know them as to satisfy this ideal, however much we may still fall short of it.

The same also as to knowing our own and other modern nations, with the like aim of getting to understand ourselves and the world. To know the best that has been thought and said by the modern nations, is to know, says Professor Huxley, "only what modern *literatures* have to tell us; it is the criticism of life contained in modern literature." And yet "the distinctive character of our times," he urges, "lies in the vast and constantly increasing part which is played by natural knowledge." And how, therefore, can a man, devoid of knowledge of what physical science has done in the last century, enter hopefully upon a criticism of modern life?

Let us, I say, be agreed about the meaning of the terms we are using. I talk of knowing the best which has been thought and uttered in the world; Professor Huxley says this means knowing *literature.* Literature is a large word; it may mean everything written with letters or printed in a book. Euclid's *Elements* and Newton's *Principia*[3] are thus literature. All knowledge that reaches us through books is literature. But by literature Professor Huxley means belles-lettres. He means to make me say, that knowing the best which has been thought and said by the modern nations is knowing their belles-lettres and no more. And this is no sufficient equipment, he argues, for a criticism of modern life. But as I do not mean, by knowing ancient Rome, knowing merely more or less of Latin belles-lettres, and taking no account of Rome's military, and political, and legal, and administrative work in the world; and as, by knowing ancient Greece, I understand knowing her as the giver of Greek art, and the guide to a free and right use of reason and to scientific method, and the founder of our mathematics and physics and astronomy and biology—I understand knowing her as all this, and

not merely knowing certain Greek poems, and histories, and treatises, and speeches—so as to the knowledge of modern nations also. By knowing modern nations, I mean not merely knowing their belles-lettres, but knowing also what has been done by such men as Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Darwin. "Our ancestors learned," says Professor Huxley, "that the earth is the center of the visible universe, and that man is the cynosure of things terrestrial; and more especially was it inculcated that the course of nature had no fixed order, but that it could be, and constantly was, altered." "But for us now," continues Professor Huxley, "the notions of the beginning and the end of the world entertained by our forefathers are no longer credible. It is very certain that the earth is not the chief body in the material universe, and that the world is not subordinated to man's use. It is even more certain that nature is the expression of a definite order, with which nothing interferes." "And yet," he cries, "the purely classical education advocated by the representatives of the humanists in our day gives no inkling of all this."

In due place and time I will just touch upon that vexed question of classical education; but at present the question is as to what is meant by knowing the best which modern nations have thought and said. It is not knowing their belles-lettres merely which is meant. To know Italian belles-lettres is not to know Italy, and to know English belles-lettres is not to know England. Into knowing Italy and England there comes a great deal more, Galileo and Newton amongst it. The reproach of being a superficial humanism, a tincture of belles-lettres, may attach rightly enough to some other disciplines; but to the particular discipline recommended when I proposed knowing the best that has been thought and said in the world, it does not apply. In that best I certainly include what in modern times has been thought and said by the great observers and knowers of nature.

There is, therefore, really no question between Professor Huxley and me as to whether knowing the great results of the modern scientific study of nature is not required as a part of our culture, as well as knowing the products of literature and art. But to follow the processes by which those results are reached, ought, say the friends

of physical science, to be made the staple of education for the bulk of mankind. And here there does arise a question between those whom Professor Huxley calls with playful sarcasm "the Levites of culture," and those whom the poor humanist is sometimes apt to regard as its Nebuchadnezzars.[4]

The great results of the scientific investigation of nature we are agreed upon knowing, but how much of our study are we bound to give to the processes by which those results are reached? The results have their visible bearing on human life. But all the processes, too, all the items of fact, by which those results are reached and established, are interesting. All knowledge is interesting to a wise man, and the knowledge of nature is interesting to all men. It is very interesting to know, that, from the albuminous white of the egg, the chick in the egg gets the materials for its flesh, bones, blood, and feathers; while, from the fatty yolk of the egg, it gets the heat and energy which enable it at length to break its shell and begin the world. It is less interesting, perhaps, but still it is interesting, to know that when a taper burns, the wax is converted into carbonic acid and water. Moreover, it is quite true that the habit of dealing with facts, which is given by the study of nature, is, as the friends of physical science praise it for being, an excellent discipline. The appeal, in the study of nature, is constantly to observation and experiment; not only is it said that the thing is so, but we can be made to see that it is so. Not only does a man tell us that when a taper burns the wax is converted into carbonic acid and water, as a man may tell us, if he likes, that Charon[5] is punting his ferry boat on the river Styx, or that Victor Hugo is a sublime poet, or Mr. Gladstone[6] the most admirable of statesmen; but we are made to see that the conversion into carbonic acid and water does actually happen. This reality of natural knowledge it is, which makes the friends of physical science contrast it, as a knowledge of things, with the humanist's knowledge, which is, say they, a knowledge of words. And hence Professor Huxley is moved to lay it down that, "for the purpose of attaining real culture, an exclusively scientific education is at least as effectual as an exclusively literary education." And a

certain President of the Section for Mechanical Science in the British Association is, in Scripture phrase, "very bold,"[7] and declares that if a man, in his mental training, "has substituted literature and history for natural science, he has chosen the less useful alternative." But whether we go these lengths or not, we must all admit that in natural science the habit gained of dealing with facts is a most valuable discipline, and that everyone should have some experience of it.

More than this, however, is demanded by the reformers. It is proposed to make the training in natural science the main part of education, for the great majority of mankind at any rate. And here, I confess, I part company with the friends of physical science, with whom up to this point I have been agreeing. In differing from them, however, I wish to proceed with the utmost caution and diffidence. The smallness of my own acquaintance with the disciplines of natural science is ever before my mind, and I am fearful of doing these disciplines an injustice. The ability and pugnacity of the partisans of natural science make them formidable persons to contradict. The tone of tentative inquiry, which befits a being of dim faculties and bounded knowledge, is the tone I would wish to take and not to depart from. At present it seems to me, that those who are for giving to natural knowledge, as they call it, the chief place in the education of the majority of mankind, leave one important thing out of their account: the constitution of human nature. But I put this forward on the strength of some facts not at all recondite, very far from it; facts capable of being stated in the simplest possible fashion, and to which, if I so state them, the man of science will, I am sure, be willing to allow their due weight.

Deny the facts altogether, I think, he hardly can. He can hardly deny, that when we set ourselves to enumerate the powers which go to the building up of human life, and say that they are the power of conduct, the power of intellect and knowledge, the power of beauty, and the power of social life and manners—he can hardly deny that this scheme, though drawn in rough and plain lines enough, and not pretending to scientific exactness, does yet give a fairly true

representation of the matter. Human nature is built up by these powers; we have the need for them all. When we have rightly met and adjusted the claims of them all, we shall then be in a fair way for getting soberness and righteousness, with wisdom. This is evident enough, and the friends of physical science would admit it.

But perhaps they may not have sufficiently observed another thing: namely, that the several powers just mentioned are not isolated, but there is, in the generality of mankind, a perpetual tendency to relate them one to another in divers ways. With one such way of relating them I am particularly concerned now. Following our instinct for intellect and knowledge, we acquire pieces of knowledge; and presently, in the generality of men, there arises the desire to relate these pieces of knowledge to our sense for conduct, to our sense for beauty—and there is weariness and dissatisfaction if the desire is balked. Now in this desire lies, I think, the strength of that hold which letters have upon us.

All knowledge is, as I said just now, interesting; and even items of knowledge which from the nature of the case cannot well be related, but must stand isolated in our thoughts, have their interest. Even lists of exceptions have their interest. If we are studying Greek accents, it is interesting to know that *pais* and *pas,* and some other monosyllables of the same form of declension, do not take the circumflex upon the last syllable of the genitive plural, but vary, in this respect, from the common rule. If we are studying physiology, it is interesting to know that the pulmonary artery carries dark blood and the pulmonary vein carries bright blood, departing in this respect from the common rule for the division of labor between the veins and the arteries. But everyone knows how we seek naturally to combine the pieces of our knowledge together, to bring them under general rules, to relate them to principles; and how unsatisfactory and tiresome it would be to go on forever learning lists of exceptions, or accumulating items of fact which must stand isolated.

Well, that same need of relating our knowledge, which operates here within the sphere of our knowledge itself, we shall find operating, also, outside that sphere. We experience, as we go on

learning and knowing—the vast majority of us experience—the need of relating what we have learnt and known to the sense which we have in us for conduct, to the sense which we have in us for beauty.

A certain Greek prophetess of Mantineia in Arcadia, Diotima by name, once explained to the philosopher Socrates that love, and impulse, and bent of all kinds, is, in fact, nothing else but the desire in men that good should forever be present to them. This desire for good, Diotima assured Socrates, is our fundamental desire, of which fundamental desire every impulse in us is only some one particular form.[8] And therefore this fundamental desire it is, I suppose—this desire in men that good should be forever present to them—which acts in us when we feel the impulse for relating our knowledge to our sense for conduct and to our sense for beauty. At any rate, with men in general the instinct exists. Such is human nature. And the instinct, it will be admitted, is innocent, and human nature is preserved by our following the lead of its innocent instincts. Therefore, in seeking to gratify this instinct in question, we are following the instinct of self-preservation in humanity.

But, no doubt, some kinds of knowledge cannot be made to directly serve the instinct in question, cannot be directly related to the sense for beauty, to the sense for conduct. These are instrument knowledges; they lead on to other knowledges, which can. A man who passes his life in instrument knowledges is a specialist. They may be invaluable as instruments to something beyond, for those who have the gift thus to employ them; and they may be disciplines in themselves wherein it is useful for everyone to have some schooling. But it is inconceivable that the generality of men should pass all their mental life with Greek accents or with formal logic. My friend Professor Sylvester, who is one of the first[9] mathematicians in the world, holds transcendental doctrines as to the virtue of mathematics, but those doctrines are not for common men. In the very Senate House and heart of our English Cambridge[1] I once ventured, though not without an apology for my profaneness, to hazard the opinion that for the majority of mankind a little of mathematics, even, goes a long way. Of course this is quite

consistent with their being of immense importance as an instrument to something else; but it is the few who have the aptitude for thus using them, not the bulk of mankind.

The natural sciences do not, however, stand on the same footing with these instrument knowledges. Experience shows us that the generality of men will find more interest in learning that, when a taper burns, the wax is converted into carbonic acid and water, or in learning the explanation of the phenomenon of dew, or in learning how the circulation of the blood is carried on, than they find in learning that the genitive plural of *pais* and *pas* does not take the circumflex on the termination. And one piece of natural knowledge is added to another, and others are added to that, and at last we come to propositions so interesting as Mr. Darwin's famous proposition that "our ancestor was a hairy quadruped furnished with a tail and pointed ears, probably arboreal in his habits."[2] Or we come to propositions of such reach and magnitude as those which Professor Huxley delivers, when he says that the notions of our forefathers about the beginning and the end of the world were all wrong, and that nature is the expression of a definite order with which nothing interferes.

Interesting, indeed, these results of science are, important they are, and we should all of us be acquainted with them. But what I now wish you to mark is, that we are still, when they are propounded to us and we receive them, we are still in the sphere of intellect and knowledge. And for the generality of men there will be found, I say, to arise, when they have duly taken in the proposition that their ancestor was "a hairy quadruped furnished with a tail and pointed ears, probably arboreal in his habits," there will be found to arise an invincible desire to relate this proposition to the sense in us for conduct, and to the sense in us for beauty. But this the men of science will not do for us, and will hardly even profess to do. They will give us other pieces of knowledge, other facts, about other animals and their ancestors, or about plants, or about stones, or about stars; and they may finally bring us to those great "general conceptions of the universe, which are forced upon us all," says

Professor Huxley, "by the progress of physical science." But still it will be *knowledge* only which they give us; knowledge not put for us into relation with our sense for conduct, our sense for beauty, and touched with emotion by being so put; not thus put for us, and therefore, to the majority of mankind, after a certain while, unsatisfying, wearying.

Not to the born naturalist, I admit. But what do we mean by a born naturalist? We mean a man in whom the zeal for observing nature is so uncommonly strong and eminent, that it marks him off from the bulk of mankind. Such a man will pass his life happily in collecting natural knowledge and reasoning upon it, and will ask for nothing, or hardly anything, more. I have heard it said that the sagacious and admirable naturalist whom we lost not very long ago, Mr. Darwin, once owned to a friend that for his part he did not experience the necessity for two things which most men find so necessary to them—religion and poetry; science and the domestic affections, he thought, were enough. To a born naturalist, I can well understand that this should seem so. So absorbing is his occupation with nature, so strong his love for his occupation, that he goes on acquiring natural knowledge and reasoning upon it, and has little time or inclination for thinking about getting it related to the desire in man for conduct, the desire in man for beauty. He relates it to them for himself as he goes along, so far as he feels the need; and he draws from the domestic affections all the additional solace necessary. But then Darwins are extremely rare. Another great and admirable master of natural knowledge, Faraday,[3] was a Sandemanian. That is to say, he related his knowledge to his instinct for conduct and to his instinct for beauty, by the aid of that respectable Scottish sectary, Robert Sandeman.[4] And so strong, in general, is the demand of religion and poetry to have their share in a man, to associate themselves with his knowing, and to relieve and rejoice it, that, probably, for one man amongst us with the disposition to do as Darwin did in this respect, there are at least fifty with the disposition to do as Faraday.

Education lays hold upon us, in fact, by satisfying this demand. Professor Huxley holds up to scorn medieval education, with its neglect of the knowledge of nature, its poverty even of literary studies, its formal logic devoted to "showing how and why that which the Church said was true must be true." But the great medieval Universities were not brought into being, we may be sure, by the zeal for giving a jejune and contemptible education. Kings have been their nursing fathers, and queens have been their nursing mothers,[5] but not for this. The medieval Universities came into being, because the supposed knowledge, delivered by Scripture and the Church, so deeply engaged men's hearts, by so simply, easily, and powerfully relating itself to their desire for conduct, their desire for beauty. All other knowledge was dominated by this supposed knowledge and was subordinated to it, because of the surpassing strength of the hold which it gained upon the affections of men, by allying itself profoundly with their sense for conduct, their sense for beauty.

But now, says Professor Huxley, conceptions of the universe fatal to the notions held by our forefathers have been forced upon us by physical science. Grant to him that they are thus fatal, that the new conceptions must and will soon become current everywhere, and that everyone will finally perceive them to be fatal to the beliefs of our forefathers. The need of humane letters, as they are truly called, because they serve the paramount desire in men that good should be forever present to them—the need of humane letters, to establish a relation between the new conceptions, and our instinct for beauty, our instinct for conduct, is only the more visible. The Middle Age could do without humane letters, as it could do without the study of nature, because its supposed knowledge was made to engage its emotions so powerfully. Grant that the supposed knowledge disappears, its power of being made to engage the emotions will of course disappear along with it—but the emotions themselves, and their claim to be engaged and satisfied, will remain. Now if we find by experience that humane letters have an undeniable power of engaging the emotions, the importance of humane letters in a man's

training becomes not less, but greater, in proportion to the success of modern science in extirpating what it calls "medieval thinking."

Have humane letters, then, have poetry and eloquence, the power here attributed to them of engaging the emotions, and do they exercise it? And if they have it and exercise it, *how* do they exercise it, so as to exert an influence upon man's sense for conduct, his sense for beauty? Finally, even if they both can and do exert an influence upon the senses in question, how are they to relate to them the results—the modern results—of natural science? All these questions may be asked. First, have poetry and eloquence the power of calling out the emotions? The appeal is to experience. Experience shows that for the vast majority of men, for mankind in general, they have the power. Next, do they exercise it? They do. But then, *how* do they exercise it so as to affect man's sense for conduct, his sense for beauty? And this is perhaps a case for applying the Preacher's words: "Though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea, farther, though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it."[6] Why should it be one thing, in its effect upon the emotions, to say, "Patience is a virtue," and quite another thing, in its effect upon the emotions, to say with Homer,

τλητὸν γὰρ Μοῖραι θυμὸν θέσαν ἀνθρώποισιν[7]—

"for an enduring heart have the destinies appointed to the children of men"? Why should it be one thing, in its effect upon the emotions, to say with the philosopher Spinoza, *Felicitas in eo consistit quod homo suum esse conservare potest*—"Man's happiness consists in his being able to preserve his own essence,"[8] and quite another thing, in its effect upon the emotions, to say with the Gospel, "What is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, forfeit himself?"[9] How does this difference of effect arise? I cannot tell, and I am not much concerned to know; the important thing is that it does arise, and that we can profit by it. But how, finally, are poetry and eloquence to exercise the power of relating the modern results of natural science to man's instinct for

conduct, his instinct for beauty? And here again I answer that I do not know *how* they will exercise it, but that they can and will exercise it I am sure. I do not mean that modern philosophical poets and modern philosophical moralists are to come and relate for us, in express terms, the results of modern scientific research to our instinct for conduct, our instinct for beauty. But I mean that we shall find, as a matter of experience, if we know the best that has been thought and uttered in the world, we shall find that the art and poetry and eloquence of men who lived, perhaps, long ago, who had the most limited natural knowledge, who had the most erroneous conceptions about many important matters, we shall find that this art, and poetry, and eloquence, have in fact not only the power of refreshing and delighting us, they have also the power—such is the strength and worth, in essentials, of their authors' criticism of life—they have a fortifying, and elevating, and quickening, and suggestive power, capable of wonderfully helping us to relate the results of modern science to our need for conduct, our need for beauty. Homer's conceptions of the physical universe were, I imagine, grotesque; but really, under the shock of hearing from modern science that "the world is not subordinated to man's use, and that man is not the cynosure of things terrestrial," I could, for my own part, desire no better comfort than Homer's line which I quoted just now,

τλητὸν γὰρ Mo4ραι θυμὸν θέσαν ἀνθρώποισιν—

"for an enduring heart have the destinies appointed to the children of men"!

And the more that men's minds are cleared, the more that the results of science are frankly accepted, the more that poetry and eloquence come to be received and studied as what in truth they really are—the criticism of life by gifted men, alive and active with extraordinary power at an unusual number of points—so much the more will the value of humane letters, and of art also, which is an utterance having a like kind of power with theirs, be felt and acknowledged, and their place in education be secured.

Let us therefore, all of us, avoid indeed as much as possible any invidious comparison between the merits of humane letters, as means of education, and the merits of the natural sciences. But when some President of a Section for Mechanical Science insists on making the comparison, and tells us that "he who in his training has substituted literature and history for natural science has chosen the less useful alternative," let us make answer to him that the student of humane letters only, will, at least, know also the great general conceptions brought in by modern physical science; for science, as Professor Huxley says, forces them upon us all. But the student of the natural sciences only, will, by our very hypothesis, know nothing of humane letters; not to mention that in setting himself to be perpetually accumulating natural knowledge, he sets himself to do what only specialists have in general the gift for doing genially. And so he will probably be unsatisfied, or at any rate incomplete, and even more incomplete than the student of humane letters only.

I once mentioned in a school report, how a young man in one of our English training colleges having to paraphrase the passage in *Macbeth* beginning,

Can'st thou not minister to a mind diseased?[1]

turned this line into, "Can you not wait upon the lunatic?" And I remarked what a curious state of things it would be, if every pupil of our national schools knew, let us say, that the moon is two thousand one hundred and sixty miles in diameter, and thought at the same time that a good paraphrase for

Can'st thou not minister to a mind diseased?

was, "Can you not wait upon the lunatic?" If one is driven to choose, I think I would rather have a young person ignorant about the moon's diameter, but aware that "Can you not wait upon the lunatic?" is bad, than a young person whose education had been such as to manage things the other way.

Or to go higher than the pupils of our national schools. I have in my mind's eye a member of our British Parliament who comes to travel here in America, who afterwards relates his travels, and who shows a really masterly knowledge of the geology of this great country and of its mining capabilities, but who ends by gravely suggesting that the United States should borrow a prince from our Royal Family, and should make him their king, and should create a House of Lords of great landed proprietors after the pattern of ours; and then America, he thinks, would have her future happily and perfectly secured. Surely, in this case, the President of the Section for Mechanical Science would himself hardly say that our member of Parliament, by concentrating himself upon geology and mineralogy, and so on, and not attending to literature and history, had "chosen the more useful alternative."

If then there is to be separation and option between humane letters on the one hand, and the natural sciences on the other, the great majority of mankind, all who have not exceptional and overpowering aptitudes for the study of nature, would do well, I cannot but think, to choose to be educated in humane letters rather than in the natural sciences. Letters will call out their being at more points, will make them live more.

I said that before I ended I would just touch on the question of classical education, and I will keep my word. Even if literature is to retain a large place in our education, yet Latin and Greek, say the friends of progress, will certainly have to go. Greek is the grand offender in the eyes of these gentlemen. The attackers of the established course of study think that against Greek, at any rate, they have irresistible arguments. Literature may perhaps be needed in education, they say; but why on earth should it be Greek literature? Why not French or German? Nay, "has not an Englishman models in his own literature of every kind of excellence?"[2] As before, it is not on any weak pleadings of my own that I rely for convincing the gainsayers; it is on the constitution of human nature itself, and on the instinct of self-preservation in humanity. The instinct for beauty is set in human nature, as surely as the instinct for

knowledge is set there, or the instinct for conduct. If the instinct for beauty is served by Greek literature and art as it is served by no other literature and art, we may trust to the instinct of self-preservation in humanity for keeping Greek as part of our culture. We may trust to it for even making the study of Greek more prevalent than it is now. Greek will come, I hope, some day to be studied more rationally than at present; but it will be increasingly studied as men increasingly feel the need in them for beauty, and how powerfully Greek art and Greek literature can serve this need. Women will again study Greek, as Lady Jane Grey[3] did; I believe that in that chain of forts, with which the fair host of the Amazons are now engirdling our English universities,[4] I find that here in America, in colleges like Smith College in Massachusetts, and Vassar College in the State of New York, and in the happy families of the mixed universities out West, they are studying it already.

Defuit una mihi symmetria prisca—"The antique symmetry was the one thing wanting to me," said Leonardo da Vinci; and he was an Italian. I will not presume to speak for the Americans, but I am sure that, in the Englishman, the want of this admirable symmetry of the Greeks is a thousand times more great and crying than in any Italian. The results of the want show themselves most glaringly, perhaps, in our architecture, but they show themselves, also, in all our art. *Fit details strictly combined, in view of a large general result nobly conceived;* that is just the beautiful *symmetria prisca* of the Greeks, and it is just where we English fail, where all our art fails. Striking ideas we have, and well-executed details we have; but that high symmetry which, with satisfying and delightful effect, combines them, we seldom or never have. The glorious beauty of the Acropolis at Athens did not come from single fine things stuck about on that hill, a statue here, a gateway there—no, it arose from all things being perfectly combined for a supreme total effect. What must not an Englishman feel about our deficiencies in this respect, as the sense for beauty, whereof this symmetry is an essential element, awakens and strengthens within him! what will not one day be his respect and desire for Greece and its *symmetria prisca,* when the

scales drop from his eyes as he walks the London streets, and he sees such a lesson in meanness as the Strand, for instance, in its true deformity! But here we are coming to our friend Mr. Ruskin's province,[5] and I will not intrude upon it, for he is its very sufficient guardian.

And so we at last find, it seems, we find flowing in favor of the humanities the natural and necessary stream of things, which seemed against them when we started. The "hairy quadruped furnished with a tail and pointed ears, probably arboreal in his habits," this good fellow carried hidden in his nature, apparently, something destined to develop into a necessity for humane letters. Nay, more; we seem finally to be even led to the further conclusion that our hairy ancestor carried in his nature, also, a necessity for Greek.

And therefore, to say the truth, I cannot really think that humane letters are in much actual danger of being thrust out from their leading place in education, in spite of the array of authorities against them at this moment. So long as human nature is what it is, their attractions will remain irresistible. As with Greek, so with letters generally: they will some day come, we may hope, to be studied more rationally, but they will not lose their place. What will happen will rather be that there will be crowded into education other matters besides, far too many; there will be, perhaps, a period of unsettlement and confusion and false tendency; but letters will not in the end lose their leading place. If they lose it for a time, they will get it back again. We shall be brought back to them by our wants and aspirations. And a poor humanist may possess his soul in patience, neither strive nor cry,[6] admit the energy and brilliancy of the partisans of physical science, and their present favor with the public, to be far greater than his own, and still have a happy faith that the nature of things works silently on behalf of the studies which he loves, and that, while we shall all have to acquaint ourselves with the great results reached by modern science, and to give ourselves as much training in its disciplines as we can conveniently carry, yet the majority of men will always require

humane letters; and so much the more, as they have the more and the greater results of science to relate to the need in man for conduct, and to the need in him for beauty.

1882, 1885

Endnotes

- Note 1: Delivered as a lecture during Arnold's tour of the United States in 1883 and published in *Discourses in America* (1885), this essay has become a classic contribution to a subject endlessly debated. Its main argument was summed up by Stuart P. Sherman: "If Arnold had said outright that the study of letters helps us to *bear* the grand results of science, he would not have been guilty of a superficial epigram; he would have spoken from the depths of his experience."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: *Republic* 6.495.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: *Republic* 3.405.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: See "Literary Ethics," an address delivered at Dartmouth College in 1838 by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: *Republic* 9.591.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Unconvincing, fanciful.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: This phrase is taken from Arnold's essay "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1864).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–1895), biologist, anthropologist, and public speaker on issues relating to scientific inquiry, is perhaps best remembered for his passionate defense of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Ernest Renan (1823–1892), French religious philosopher and archaeologist.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Friedrich August Wolf (1759–1824), German scholar.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Characteristic spirit or excellence.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A comprehensive treatise on mathematics (ca. 300 B.C.E.) and a foundational work of modern physics (*The*

Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy, 1687), respectively.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Huxley implies that the humanists are hidebound conservatives like the Levites, priests who were preoccupied with traditional ritual observances. Arnold implies that the scientists may be like Nebuchadnezzar, a Babylonian king who destroyed the temple of Jerusalem.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: In Greek mythology the boatman who conducted the souls of the dead across the river Styx.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: William Ewart Gladstone (1809–1898), leader of the Liberal Party from 1868 to 1875 and from 1880 to 1894 and prime minister four times. Hugo (1802–1885), French poet and novelist.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Romans 10:20.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Plato's *Symposium* 201–7.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Foremost. James J. Sylvester (1814–1897), professor of mathematics at Johns Hopkins University and at Oxford.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In its original form "Literature and Science" had been delivered as a lecture at Cambridge University, where mathematics traditionally has been emphasized.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: *The Descent of Man* (1871), chap. 21 (see p. 302).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Michael Faraday (1791–1867), British chemist.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Founder of a Scottish sect bearing his name (1718–1771). "Sectary": zealous member of a sect.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Isaiah 49:23.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Ecclesiastes 8:17 [*Arnold's note*].Return to reference 6
- Note 7: *Iliad* 24.49 [*Arnold's note*].Return to reference 7
- Note 8: *Ethics* (1677) 4.18.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Luke 9:25.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Shakespeare's *Macbeth* 5.3.42.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Arnold is here responding to Huxley's claim that training in science is better preparation for life than a classical education.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Reputed to be a learned scholar in Greek. Grey (1537–1554) was proclaimed queen of England in 1553 but was forced to abdicate the throne nine days later. She was executed by order of Queen Mary.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Colleges for women at Oxford and Cambridge.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: In books such as *The Stones of Venice* (1851–53), John Ruskin had criticized the "meanness" of Victorian architecture.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Matthew 12:19; "possess his soul in patience," Luke 21:9.Return to reference 6

Pre-Raphaelitism

Pre-Raphaelitism was more than a movement in nineteenth-century art. It was also a cultural attitude: a complex of taste, style, and belief. The movement began among a set of young artists studying painting at the Royal Academy in the late 1840s. In revolt against the compositional principles of the academic art of their day, which derived from the work of the Italian Renaissance painter Raphael (1483–1520), they came together in 1848 to form a secret society they named the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, signing their paintings with the mysterious initials "PRB." The leaders of the group were William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, all young at the time—twenty-one, nineteen, and twenty. Although the bright colors, foreshortened perspective, and medieval subjects of some of their early paintings suggest medieval models, they embraced such models because of their commitment to a new ideal of naturalism. Art since Raphael, they felt, paid more attention to conventional formulas of picture making; to find a purer naturalism, the artist needed to go back to the art before Raphael. In their pursuit of realism their strongest influence was John Ruskin. Hunt had read *Modern Painters* in 1847, and introduced it to his fellow artists. The Pre-Raphaelites aspired to paint directly from nature, working in the open air, often making extraordinary efforts to achieve a photographic fidelity of detail. To depict the nighttime landscape accurately for his religious painting of Christ, *The Light of the World*, Hunt constructed a straw hut in a farm orchard, where he worked by the light of the full moon.

As soon as they began to exhibit their paintings in 1849, the Pre-Raphaelites provoked energetic debate. To expound their ideas about art and to publish writing by themselves and their friends, they founded *The Germ*, the first journal ever published by an artistic group. (It was in *The Germ* that Rossetti's poem "The Blessed Damozel" originally appeared.) The controversy about their

work reached a peak in 1850, when John Everett Millais exhibited his painting *Christ in the House of His Parents*. Charles Dickens virulently attacked the painting in his journal, *Household Words*; the figures in the painting, he wrote, "might be undressed in any hospital where dirty drunkards, in a high state of varicose veins, are received." Ruskin came to the defense, both in letters to the *Times* and in a pamphlet, *Pre-Raphaelitism.* The argument was essentially about realism: should the artist represent sacred subjects with naturalistic models? The Pre-Raphaelites' rendition of detail was equally controversial; their canvases were crowded with objects, each weighted with symbolic meaning and painted with photographic accuracy.

By 1853, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood had begun to disintegrate. "The P.R.B. is in its decadence," Christina Rossetti wrote in a whimsical sonnet. In 1853 Millais was elected to the Royal Academy against which he had rebelled; Hunt began a series of trips to the Holy Land to paint biblical scenes on location; and Rossetti, in his sister's words, shunned "the vulgar optic." However, other artists began to adopt their principles, and collectors started to acquire their work.

Meanwhile, Rossetti had turned to painting watercolors on medieval themes. His work attracted the admiration of two undergraduates at Oxford, Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris, who independently had developed an interest in all things medieval. Burne-Jones sought Rossetti out, and the three formed a partnership. In 1857 the three gained a commission to paint murals from the *Morte d'Arthur* in the Debating Society Hall of the Oxford Union. At Rossetti's urging, Morris and Burne-Jones rented a flat in Bloomsbury, which they began to decorate in medieval style, designing and making furniture, just as they imagined medieval artisans might do—a project that led Morris in 1861 to establish a firm to make handcrafted furniture, tapestries, wallpaper, fabric, and other decorative objects. Rossetti also encouraged Morris to write poetry, his sister Christina began to publish her work, and he himself started to publish again for the first time since the short-lived *Germ.*

While painting the Oxford murals, Rossetti met Algernon Charles Swinburne, at the time an undergraduate, who started to move in Pre-Raphaelite circles. The association of Rossetti, Morris, and Burne-Jones thus became the nucleus of a second phase of Pre-Raphaelitism, one central to the emergence in the last third of the century of aestheticism in poetry and of the Arts and Crafts movement. The second phase of Pre-Raphaelite painting presents many contrasts to the first. In the 1860s Rossetti began to paint looming images of women incarnating various aspects of female beauty; Burne-Jones concentrated on legends and myths represented in a highly mannered, dreamy style.

Despite the stylistic contrasts between the two phases of Pre-Raphaelitism, they share a changed understanding of the artist in relationship to society. The artist defines himself as apart from society, self-consciously avant-garde, in rebellion against artistic and cultural conventions. This rebellion takes a number of overlapping, sometimes conflicting forms: naturalism, medievalism, aestheticism. Throughout the evolution of Pre-Raphaelitism, painting and poetry remain closely allied, and not merely because Rossetti was at once painter and poet. Both the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the group that came together at Oxford in the late 1850s frequently chose literary subjects for their paintings; the poets among them wrote works that fused fantasy with a vivid sense of visual detail. Both groups were trying to explore the symbol, whether the plenitude of details weighted with meaning in Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* or the looming female figures that Rossetti painted and described in his paired paintings and sonnets, *Soul's Beauty* and *Body's Beauty.* Pre-Raphaelitism has been a difficult term to define in the history of poetry and painting because it seems to encompass such conflicting elements—microscopic fidelity to detail, dreamlike reverie, prominence of pattern and design. Late in his life, Rossetti dismissed the seriousness of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, claiming that the banding together under that title was all a joke of a half-dozen boys. But he conceded that the movement was serious. In the course of its history, that movement came to define more

than a style of painting; it was an attitude toward design that shaped the Arts and Crafts movement, an attitude toward symbol central to aestheticism and decadence, and a vision of the arts in relationship both to each other and to society that had a deep impact on writers like the young Yeats, developing their work in the final decade of the century.

Reproductions of *Christ in the House of His Parents*, *The Awakening Conscience*, *Soul's Beauty*, *Body's Beauty*, and other Pre-Raphaelite works appear in this volume's Image Gallery.

CHARLES DICKENS

Dickens (1812–1870) published the following article in *Household Words*, the weekly journal he edited.

From Old Lamps for New Ones

In the fifteenth century, a certain feeble lamp of art arose in the Italian town of Urbino. This poor light, Raphael Sanzio by name, better known to a few miserably mistaken wretches in these later days, as Raphael (another burned at the same time, called Titian),[1] was fed with a preposterous idea of Beauty—with a ridiculous power of etherealising, and exalting to the very Heaven of Heavens, what was most sublime and lovely in the expression of the human face divine on Earth—with the truly contemptible conceit of finding in poor humanity the fallen likeness of the angels of GOD, and raising it up again to their pure spiritual condition. This very fantastic whim effected a low revolution in Art, in this wise, that Beauty came to be regarded as one of its indispensable elements. In this very poor delusion, Artists have continued until this present nineteenth century, when it was reserved for some bold aspirants to "put it down."

The Pre-Raphael Brotherhood, Ladies and Gentlemen, is the dread Tribunal which is to set this matter right. Walk up, walk up; and here, conspicuous on the wall of the Royal Academy of Art in England, in the eighty-second year of their annual exhibition, you shall see what this new Holy Brotherhood, this terrible Police that is to disperse all Post-Raphael offenders, has "been and done!"

You come—in this Royal Academy Exhibition, which is familiar with the works of WILKIE, COLLINS, ETTY, EASTLAKE, LESLIE, MACLISE, TURNER, STANFIELD, LANDSEER, ROBERTS, DANBY, CRESWICK, LEE, WEBSTER, HERBERT, DYCE, COPE,[2] and others who would have been renowned as great masters in any age or country—you come, in this place, to the contemplation of a Holy Family.[3] You will have the goodness to discharge from your minds all Post-Raphael ideas, all religious aspirations, all elevating thoughts; all tender, awful, sorrowful, ennobling, sacred, graceful, or beautiful associations; and to prepare

yourselves, as befits such a subject—Pre-Raphaelly considered—for the lowest depths of what is mean, odious, repulsive, and revolting.

You behold the interior of a carpenter's shop. In the foreground of that carpenter's shop is a hideous, wry-necked, blubbering, red-headed boy, in a bed-gown; who appears to have received a poke in the hand, from the stick of another boy with whom he has been playing in an adjacent gutter, and to be holding it up for the contemplation of a kneeling woman, so horrible in her ugliness, that (supposing it were possible for any human creature to exist for a moment with that dislocated throat) she would stand out from the rest of the company as a Monster, in the vilest cabaret in France, or the lowest gin-shop in England. Two almost naked carpenters, master and journeyman, worthy companions of this agreeable female, are working at their trade; a boy, with some small flavor of humanity in him, is entering with a vessel of water; and nobody is paying any attention to a snuffy old woman who seems to have mistaken that shop for the tobacconist's next door, and to be hopelessly waiting at the counter to be served with half an ounce of her favourite mixture. Wherever it is possible to express ugliness of feature, limb, or attitude, you have it expressed. Such men as the carpenters might be undressed in any hospital where dirty drunkards, in a high state of varicose veins, are received. Their very toes have walked out of Saint Giles's.[4]

This, in the nineteenth century, and in the eighty-second year of the annual exhibition of the National Academy of Art, is the Pre-Raphael representation to us, Ladies and Gentlemen, of the most solemn passage which our minds can ever approach. This, in the nineteenth century, and in the eighty-second year of the annual exhibition of the National Academy of Art, is what Pre-Raphael Art can do to render reverence and homage to the faith in which we live and die!

1850

Endnotes

- Note 1: Raphael (1483–1520) and Titian (1490–1576), painters of the Italian Renaissance.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: All 19th-century British painters exhibited at the Royal Academy.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: See the color insert for a reproduction of this painting, *Christ in the House of His Parents*, by John Everett Millais.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A slum district in central London.Return to reference 4

JOHN RUSKIN

This letter from Ruskin (1819–1900) appeared in the London *Times.*

["The Awakening Conscience"]

SIR,—Your kind insertion of my notes on Mr. Hunt's principal picture[1] encourages me to hope that you may yet allow me room in your columns for a few words respecting his second work in the Royal Academy, the "Awakening Conscience."[2] Not that this picture is obscure, or its story feebly told. I am at a loss to know how its meaning could be rendered more distinctly, but assuredly it is not understood. People gaze at it in a blank wonder, and leave it hopelessly; so that, though it is almost an insult to the painter to explain his thoughts in this instance, I cannot persuade myself to leave it thus misunderstood. The poor girl has been sitting singing with her seducer; some chance words of the song, "Oft in the stilly night,"[3] have struck upon the numbed places of her heart; she has started up in agony; he, not seeing her face, goes on singing, striking the keys carelessly with his gloved hand.

I suppose that no one possessing the slightest knowledge of expression could remain untouched by the countenance of the lost girl, rent from its beauty into sudden horror; the lips half open, indistinct in their purple quivering; the teeth set hard; the eyes filled with the fearful light of futurity, and with tears of ancient days.[4] But I can easily understand that to many persons the careful rendering of the inferior details in this picture cannot but be at first offensive, as calling their attention away from the principal subject. It is true that detail of this kind has long been so carelessly rendered, that the perfect finishing of it becomes a matter of curiosity, and therefore an interruption to serious thought. But, without entering into the question of the general propriety of such treatment, I would only observe that, at least in this instance, it is based on a truer principle of the pathetic than any of the common artistical expedients of the schools. Nothing is more notable than the way in which even the most trivial objects force themselves upon the attention of a mind

which has been fevered by violent and distressful excitement. They thrust themselves forward with a ghastly and unendurable distinctness, as if they would compel the sufferer to count, or measure, or learn them by heart. Even to the mere spectator a strange interest exalts the accessories of a scene in which he bears witness to human sorrow. There is not a single object in all that room—common, modern, vulgar (in the vulgar sense, as it may be), but it becomes tragical, if rightly read. That furniture so carefully painted, even to the last vein of the rosewood—is there nothing to be learnt from that terrible lustre of it, from its fatal newness; nothing there that has the old thoughts of home upon it, or that is ever to become a part of home? Those embossed books, vain and useless—they also new—marked with no happy wearing of beloved leaves; the torn and dying bird upon the floor; the gilded tapestry, with the fowls of the air feeding on the ripened corn; the picture above the fireplace, with its single drooping figure—the woman taken in adultery;[5] nay, the very hem of the poor girl's dress, at which the painter has laboured so closely, thread by thread, has story in it, if we think how soon its pure whiteness may be soiled with dust and rain, her outcast feet failing in the street; and the fair garden flowers, seen in that reflected sunshine of the mirror,—these also have their language—

> "Hope not to find delight in us, they say,
> For we are spotless, Jessy—we are pure."[6]

I surely need not go on. Examine the whole range of the walls of the Academy,—nay, examine those of all our public and private galleries,—and while pictures will be met with by the thousand which literally tempt to evil, by the thousand which are directed to the meanest trivialities of incident or emotion, by the thousand to the delicate fancies of inactive religion, there will not be found one powerful as this to meet full in the front the moral evil of the age in which it is painted; to waken into mercy the cruel thoughtlessness of youth, and subdue the severities of judgment into the sanctity of compassion.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,

THE AUTHOR OF "MODERN PAINTERS."

1854

Endnotes

- Note 1: *The Light of the World,* a painting of the figure of Jesus.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: See the color insert for a reproduction of this painting.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A song, with words by the Irish poet Thomas Moore (1779–1852), about the pull of childhood memories.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Hunt later softened the look on the girl's face in the original painting at the request of its buyer, who found he couldn't bear to look at it.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: John, 8:3.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: From "Elegy 26" by British poet William Shenstone (1714–1763).Return to reference 6

JOHN RUSKIN

This selection is taken from the fourth of a series of lectures on architecture and painting that Ruskin delivered in Edinburgh, later published as a book.

From Pre-Raphaelitism

Pre-Raphaelitism has but one principle, that of absolute, uncompromising truth in all that it does, obtained by working everything, down to the most minute detail, from nature, and from nature only.[1] Every Pre-Raphaelite landscape background is painted to the last touch, in the open air, from the thing itself. Every Pre-Raphaelite figure, however studied in expression, is a true portrait of some living person. Every minute accessory is painted in the same manner. And one of the chief reasons for the violent opposition with which the school has been attacked by other artists, is the enormous cost of care and labour which such a system demands from those who adopt it, in contradistinction to the present slovenly and imperfect style.

This is the main Pre-Raphaelite principle. But the battle which its supporters have to fight is a hard one; and for that battle they have been fitted by a very peculiar character.

You perceive that the principal resistance they have to make is to that spurious beauty, whose attractiveness had tempted men to forget, or to despise, the more noble quality of sincerity: and in order at once to put them beyond the power of temptation from this beauty, they are, as a body, characterised by a total absence of sensibility to the ordinary and popular forms of artistic gracefulness; while, to all that still lower kind of prettiness, which regulates the disposition of our scenes upon the stage, and which appears in our lower art, as in our annuals, our commonplace portraits, and statuary, the Pre-Raphaelites are not only dead, but they regard it with a contempt and aversion approaching to disgust. This character is absolutely necessary to them in the present time; but it, of course, occasionally renders their work comparatively unpleasing. As the school becomes less aggressive, and more authoritative—which it will do—they will enlist into their ranks men who will work, mainly,

upon their principles, and yet embrace more of those characters which are generally attractive, and this great ground of offence will be removed.

Again: you observe that as landscape painters, their principles must, in great part, confine them to mere foreground work; and singularly enough, that they may not be tempted away from this work, they have been born with comparatively little enjoyment of those evanescent effects and distant sublimities which nothing but the memory can arrest, and nothing but a daring conventionalism portray. But for this work they are not now needed. Turner,[2] the first and greatest of the Pre-Raphaelites, has done it already; he, though his capacity embraced everything, and though he would sometimes, in his foregrounds, paint the spots upon a dead trout, and the dyes upon a butterfly's wing, yet for the most part delighted to begin at that very point where the other branches of Pre-Raphaelitism become powerless.

Lastly. The habit of constantly carrying everything up to the utmost point of completion deadens the Pre-Raphaelites in general to the merits of men who, with an equal love of truth up to a certain point, yet express themselves habitually with speed and power, rather than with finish, and give abstracts of truth rather than total truth. Probably to the end of time artists will more or less be divided into these classes, and it will be impossible to make men like Millais understand the merits of men like Tintoret,[3] but this is the more to be regretted because the Pre-Raphaelites have enormous powers of imagination, as well as of realisation, and do not yet themselves know of how much they would be capable, if they sometimes worked on a larger scale, and with a less laborious finish.

With all their faults, their pictures are, since Turner's death, the best—incomparably the best—on the walls of the Royal Academy; and such works as Mr. Hunt's[4] "Claudio and Isabella" have never been rivalled, in some respects never approached, at any other period of art.

This I believe to be a most candid statement of all their faults and all their deficiencies; not such, you perceive, as are likely to

arrest their progress. The "magna est veritas"[5] was never more sure of accomplishment than by these men. Their adversaries have no chance with them. They will gradually unite their influence with whatever is true or powerful in the reactionary art of other countries; and on their works such a school will be founded as shall justify the third age of the world's civilisation, and render it as great in creation as it has been in discovery.

And now let me remind you but of one thing more. As you examine into the career of historical painting, you will be more and more struck with the fact I have this evening stated to you,—that none was ever truly great but that which represented the living forms and daily deeds of the people among whom it arose—that all precious historical work records, not the past, but the present. Remember, therefore, that it is not so much in *buying* pictures, as in *being* pictures, that you can encourage a noble school. The best patronage of art is not that which seeks for the pleasures of sentiment in a vague ideality, not for beauty of form in a marble image; but that which educates your children into living heroes, and binds down the flights and the fondnesses of the heart into practical duty and faithful devotion.

1853 1859

Endnotes

- Note 1: Or, where imagination is necessarily trusted to, by always endeavouring to conceive a fact as it really was likely to have happened, rather than as it most prettily *might* have happened. The various members of the school are not all equally severe in carrying out its principles, some of them trusting their memory or fancy very far; only all agreeing in the effort to make their memories as to seem like portraiture, and their fancy as probably to seem like memory [*Ruskin's note*].Return to reference 1
- Note 2: J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851), British landscape painter whom Ruskin praised as the model of truth to nature in art in *Modern Painters*. The atmospheric effects and evocation of light

in Turner's painting seem to place him at a far distance from the Pre-Raphaelites, but Ruskin saw their work as expressing different aspects of naturalism. See Ruskin's description of Turner's *Slave Ship,* from *Modern Painters*(p. 466) and the color insert for a reproduction of the painting.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Tintoretto (1518–1594), Italian Renaissance painter known for special lighting effects. John Everett Millais (1829–1896), one of the leading Pre-Raphaelites.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: William Holman Hunt (1827–1910), a leading Pre-Raphaelite painter.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: "Great is truth" (1 Esdras 4:41).Return to reference 5

WILLIAM MICHAEL ROSSETTI

Rossetti (1829–1919) published his brother Dante Gabriel's letters in 1895. This account of the aesthetic principles of Pre-Raphaelitism comes from the memoir he included in the first volume.

[The Pre-Raphaelite Manifesto]

Had the Præraphaelite Brotherhood any ulterior aim beyond that of producing good works of art? Yes, and No. Assuredly it had the aim of developing such *ideas* as are suited to the medium of fine art, and of bringing the arts of form into general unison with what is highest in other arts, especially poetry. Likewise the aim of showing by contrast how threadbare were the pretensions of most painters of the day, and how incapable they were of constituting or developing any sort of School of Art worthy of the name. In the person of two at least of its members, Hunt and Collinson,[1] it had also a definite relation to a Christian, and not a pagan or latitudinarian, line of thought. On the other hand, the notion that the Brotherhood, as such, had anything whatever to do with particular movements in the religious world—whether Roman Catholicism, Anglican Tractarianism,[2] or what not—is totally, and, to one who formed a link in its composition, even ludicrously, erroneous. To say that Præraphaelitism was part of "the ever-rising protest and rebellion of our century against artificial authority," as in the cases of "the French Revolution" and Wordsworth and Darwin, etc.,[3] is not indeed untrue, but is far too vague to account for anything. Again, the so-called German Præraphaelites—such as Schnorr, Overbeck, and Cornelius[4] —were in no repute with the young British artists. They did, however, admire very much certain designs by Fuhrich[5] from the Legend of St. Genevieve. Neither was Ruskin their inciter, though it is true that Hunt had read and laid to heart in 1847 the first volume of *Modern Painters*, the only thing then current as Ruskin's work. I do not think any other P.R.B. (with the possible exception of Collinson) had, up to 1848 or later, read him at all. That the Præraphaelites valued moral and spiritual ideas as an important section of the ideas germane to fine art is most true, and not one of them was in the least inclined to do any work of a gross, lascivious,

or sensual description; but neither did they limit the province of art to the spiritual or the moral. I will therefore take it upon me to say that the bond of union among the Members of the Brotherhood was really and simply this—1, To have genuine ideas to express; 2, to study Nature attentively, so as to know how to express them; 3, to sympathize with what is direct and serious and heartfelt in previous art, to the exclusion of what is conventional and self-parading and learned by rote; and 4, and most indispensable of all, to produce thoroughly good pictures and statues.

1895

Endnotes

- Note 1: William Holman Hunt (1827–1910) and James Collinson (1825–1881), both original members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Mid-19th-century Anglican movement to bring church ritual closer to its Catholic roots.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Esther Wood's *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement* (1894), 9.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794–1872), Johann Friedrich Overbeck (1789–1869), and Peter von Cornelius (1783–1867), German Romantic artists called the Nazarenes with principles similar to those of the British Pre-Raphaelites.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Joseph von Führich (1800–1876), a Nazarene painter.Return to reference 5

ROBERT BUCHANAN

Buchanan (1841–1901) was a Scottish poet and critic of modest reputation. “The Fleshly School of Poetry” brought him a great deal of attention when it was first published, and he went on to publish it as a pamphlet. He later regretted its severity. “The Fleshly School” provides an important reminder that the PRB’s literary work followed many of the same principles as their visual art—and was nearly as controversial.

From The Fleshly School of Poetry

Although he has been known for many years as a poet as well as a painter—as a painter and poet idolized by his own family and personal associates—and although he has once or twice appeared in print as a contributor to magazines, Mr. Rossetti did not formally appeal to the public until rather more than a year ago, when he published a copious volume of poems, with the announcement that the book, although it contained pieces composed at intervals during a period of many years, "included nothing which the author believes to be immature." This work was inscribed to his brother, Mr. William Rossetti, who, having written much both in poetry and criticism, will perhaps be known to bibliographers as the editor of the worst edition of Shelley which has yet seen the light. No sooner had the work appeared than the chorus of eulogy began. "The book is satisfactory from end to end," wrote Mr. Morris in the *Academy*;[1] "I think these lyrics, with all their other merits, the most complete of their time; nor do I know what lyrics of any time are to be called *great*, if we are to deny the title to these." On the same subject Mr. Swinburne went into a hysteria of admiration: "golden affluence," "jewel-coloured words," "chastity of form," "harmonious nakedness," "consummate fleshly sculpture," and so on in Mr. Swinburne's well-known manner when reviewing his friends. Other critics, with a singular similarity of phrase, followed suit. Strange to say, moreover, no one accused Mr. Rossetti of naughtiness. What had been heinous in Mr. Swinburne was majestic exquisiteness in Mr. Rossetti. Yet we question if there is anything in the unfortunate "Poems and Ballads" quite so questionable on the score of thorough nastiness as many pieces in Mr. Rossetti's collection. Mr. Swinburne was wilder, more outrageous, more blasphemous, and his subjects were more atrocious in themselves; yet the hysterical tone slew the animalism, the furiousness of epithet lowered the sensation; and the first feeling of disgust at such themes as "Laus Veneris" and "Anactoria," faded

away into comic amazement. It was only a little mad boy letting off squibs;[2] not a great strong man, who might be really dangerous to society. "I *will* be naughty!" screamed the little boy; but, after all, what did it matter? It is quite different, however, when a grown man, with the self-control and easy audacity of actual experience, comes forward to chronicle his amorous sensations, and, first proclaiming in a loud voice his literary maturity, and consequent responsibility, shamelessly prints and publishes such a piece of writing as this sonnet on "Nuptial Sleep":—

> At length their long kiss severed, with secret smart:
> And as the last slow sudden drops are shed
> From sparkling cares when all the storm has fled,
> So singly flagged the pulses of each heart.
> Their bosoms sundered, with the opening start
> Of married flowers to either side outspread
> From the knit stem; yet still their mouths, burnt red,
> Fawned on each other where they lay apart.
>
> Sleep sank them lower than the tide of dreams,
> And their dreams watched them sink, and slid away.
> Slowly their souls swam up again, through gleams
> Of watered light and dull drowned waifs of day;
> Till from some wonder of now woods and streams
> He woke, and wondered more: for there she lay.[3]

This, then, is "the golden affluence of words, the firm outline, the justice and chastity of form." Here is a full-grown man, presumably intelligent and cultivated, putting on record for other full-grown men to read, the most secret mysteries of sexual connection, and that with so sickening a desire to reproduce the sensual mood, so careful

a choice of epithet to convey mere animal sensations, that we merely shudder at the shameless nakedness. We are no purists in such matters. We hold the sensual part of our nature to be as holy as the spiritual or intellectual part and we believe that such things must find their equivalent in all; but it is neither poetic, nor manly, nor even human, to obtrude such things as the themes of whole poems. It is simply nasty. Nasty as it is, we are very mistaken if many readers do not think it nice. English society of one kind purchases the *Day's Doings*.[4] English society of another kind goes into ecstasy over Mr. Solomon's pictures[5]—pretty pieces of morality, such as "Love dying by the breath of Lust." There is not much to choose between the two objects of admiration, except that painters like Mr. Solomon lend actual genius to worthless subjects, and thereby produce veritable monsters—like the lovely devils that danced round Saint Anthony.[6] Mr. Rossetti owes his so-called success to the same causes. In poems like "Nuptial Sleep," the man who is too sensitive to exhibit his pictures, and so modest that it takes him years to make up his mind to publish his poems, parades his private sensations before a coarse public, and is gratified by their applause.

1871

Endnotes

- Note 1: *The Academy*, London periodical published from 1869 to 1902; William Morris (1834–1896), British poet.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Small firecrackers.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: This poem also appears on p. 632, as a stand-alone text with other works by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: London weekly pictorial newspaper.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Simeon Solomon (1840–1905), a painter associated with the Pre-Raphaelites.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: Anthony of Padua (1195–1231), Franciscan priest, known for preaching to the poor, the sick, and heretics.Return to reference 6

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI
1828–1882

Dante Gabriel Rossetti was the son of an Italian patriot and scholar whose political activities had led to his being exiled to England. The Rossetti household in London was one in which liberal politics and artistic topics were hotly debated: all four children—Maria Francesca, Dante Gabriel, William Michael, and Christina Georgina—wrote, drew, or engaged in scholarly pursuits from a young age. Displaying extraordinary early promise both as a painter and as a poet, Dante Gabriel luxuriated in colors and textures, and was especially drawn to feminine beauty. His view of life and art, derived in part from his close study of John Keats's poems and letters, anticipated by many years the aesthetic movement later to be represented by writers such as Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde, and the painter James McNeill Whistler, who insisted that art must be exclusively concerned with the beautiful, not with the useful or didactic.

The beauty Rossetti admired in women's faces was of a distinctive kind. In at least two of his models he found what he sought. The first was his wife, Elizabeth Siddal, whose suicide in 1862 haunted him with a sense of guilt for the rest of his life. The other was Jane Morris, the wife of his friend William Morris. In Rossetti's paintings both of these models are shown with dreamy stares, as if breathless from visions of heaven; but counteracting this impression is an emphasis on parted lips and voluptuous curves suggesting a more earthly kind of ecstasy. Similar combinations of

spirituality and physicality, or mind and body, are to be found in many of Rossetti's poems. For instance, the central figure of "The Blessed Damozel" (1850), a poem begun when Rossetti was eighteen and which was heavily influenced by the work of Dante Alighieri, leans on "the gold bar of heaven" and makes it "warm" with her bosom. In "Jenny" (1870), another work started in Rossetti's early adulthood, a male speaker muses about the life and thoughts of the young prostitute whose head rests upon his knee as she sleeps: his speculations thus replace, or stand in for, both her thoughts and more explicit sexual acts between them. And *The House of Life* (1870), his sonnet sequence, explores the relationship of spirit to body in love. Some Victorian readers found little Dante-like spirituality in *The House of Life*; the critic Robert Buchanan, for example, saw only lewd sensuality, and his 1871 pamphlet, "The Fleshly School of Poetry," treated Rossetti's poetry to the most severe abuse. Buchanan's attack hurt the poet profoundly and contributed to the bouts of depression from which he suffered in the remaining years of his life.

The Blessed Damozel[1]

The blessed damozel leaned out
  From the gold bar of heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
  Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand,
  And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
  No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary's gift,
  For service meetly° worn;
Her hair that lay along her back
  Was yellow like ripe corn.°

Herseemed[2] she scarce had been a day
  One of God's choristers;
The wonder was not yet quite gone
  From that still look of hers;
Albeit, to them she left, her day
  Had counted as ten years.

(To one it is ten years of years.
  . . . Yet now, and in this place,
Surely she leaned o'er me—her hair
  Fell all about my face. . . .
Nothing: the autumn-fall of leaves.
  The whole year sets apace.)

It was the rampart of God's house
  That she was standing on;
By God built over the sheer depth
  The which is Space begun;

So high, that looking downward thence
She scarce could see the sun.

It lies in heaven, across the flood
Of ether, as a bridge.
Beneath the tides of day and night
With flame and darkness ridge
The void, as low as where this earth
Spins like a fretful midge.

Around her, lovers, newly met
'Mid deathless love's acclaims,
Spoke evermore among themselves
Their heart-remembered names;
And the souls mounting up to God
Went by her like thin flames.

And still she bowed herself and stooped
Out of the circling charm;
Until her bosom must have made
The bar she leaned on warm,
And the lilies lay as if asleep
Along her bended arm.

From the fixed place of heaven she saw
Time like a pulse shake fierce
Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove
Within the gulf to pierce
Its path; and now she spoke as when
The stars sang in their spheres.

The sun was gone now; the curled moon
Was like a little feather
Fluttering far down the gulf; and now
She spoke through the still weather.
Her voice was like the voice the stars
Had when they sang together.[3]

(Ah, sweet! Even now, in that bird's song,
Strove not her accents there,
Fain to be harkened? When those bells
Possessed the midday air,
Strove not her steps to reach my side
Down all the echoing stair?)

"I wish that he were come to me,
For he will come," she said.
"Have I not prayed in heaven?—on earth,



The Blessed Damozel (1875–78; detail). In the second phase of his painting career, Rossetti turned from the religious and literary subjects of his early work (see, for instance, his illustration for "The Lady of Shalott," p. 212) to huge sensual portraits of women, often designed as companion pieces to his poems. For other examples of Rossetti's visual art, see the frontispiece he drew for his sister Christina's first volume of poems, p. 646, and his paintings.

Lord, Lord, has he not prayed?
Are not two prayers a perfect strength?
And shall I feel afraid?

"When round his head the aureole° clings,
And he is clothed in white,
I'll take his hand and go with him
To the deep wells of light;
As unto a stream we will step down,
And bathe there in God's sight.

"We two will stand beside that shrine,
Occult,° withheld, untrod,
Whose lamps are stirred continually
With prayer sent up to God;
And see our old prayers, granted, melt
Each like a little cloud.

"We two will lie i' the shadow of
That living mystic tree[4]
Within whose secret growth the Dove[5]
Is sometimes felt to be,
While every leaf that His plumes touch
Saith His Name audibly.

"And I myself will teach to him,
I myself, lying so,
The songs I sing here; which his voice
Shall pause in, hushed and slow,
And find some knowledge at each pause,
Or some new thing to know."

(Alas! We two, we two, thou say'st!
Yea, one wast thou with me
That once of old. But shall God lift
To endless unity

The soul whose likeness with thy soul
Was but its love for thee?)

"We two," she said, "will seek the groves
Where the lady Mary is,
With her five handmaidens, whose names
Are five sweet symphonies,
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
Margaret, and Rosalys.[6]

"Circlewise sit they, with bound locks
And foreheads garlanded;
Into the fine cloth white like flame
Weaving the golden thread,
To fashion the birth-robes for them
Who are just born, being dead.

"He shall fear, haply,° and be dumb;
Then will I lay my cheek
To his, and tell about our love,
Not once abashed or weak;
And the dear Mother will approve
My pride, and let me speak.

"Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,
To Him round whom all souls
Kneel, the clear-ranged unnumbered heads
Bowed with their aureoles;
And angels meeting us shall sing
To their citherns and citoles.[7]

"There will I ask of Christ the Lord
Thus much for him and me—
Only to live as once on earth
With Love—only to be,
As then awhile, forever now,
Together, I and he."

She gazed and listened and then said,
Less sad of speech than mild—
"All this is when he comes." She ceased.
The light thrilled toward her, filled
With angels in strong, level flight.
Her eyes prayed, and she smiled.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path
Was vague in distant spheres;
And then she cast her arms along
The golden barriers,
And laid her face between her hands,
And wept. (I heard her tears.)

1846 1850

Endnotes

- Note 1: A poetic version of "damsel," signifying a young unmarried lady. Rossetti once explained that "Blessed Damozel" is related to Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" (1845), a poem he admired. "I saw that Poe had done the utmost it was possible to do with the grief of the lover on earth, and so I determined to reverse the conditions, and give utterance to the yearning of the loved one in heaven." The thoughts of the damozel's still-living lover appear in the poem in parentheses.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: It seemed to her.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Job 38:7.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The tree of life, as described in an apocalyptic vision in the Bible (Revelation 22:2).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A tangible manifestation of the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:10), frequent in Christian art.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Rossetti creates this list of Mary's handmaidens from various saints, historical figures, and allegorical characters.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Guitarlike instruments.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *fittingly*Return to reference °
- °: *grain*Return to reference °
- °: *halo*Return to reference °
- °: *hidden, mysterious*Return to reference °
- °: *perhaps*Return to reference °

My Sister's Sleep[1]

She fell asleep on Christmas Eve.
   At length the long-ungranted shade
   Of weary eyelids overweighed
The pain nought else might yet relieve.

Our mother, who had leaned all day
   Over the bed from chime to chime,
   Then raised herself for the first time,
And as she sat her down, did pray.

Her little worktable was spread
   With work to finish. For° the glare
   Made by her candle, she had care
To work some distance from the bed.

Without, there was a cold moon up,
   Of winter radiance sheer and thin;
   The hollow halo it was in
Was like an icy crystal cup.

Through the small room, with subtle sound
   Of flame, by vents the fireshine drove
   And reddened. In its dim alcove
The mirror shed a clearness round.

I had been sitting up some nights,
   And my tired mind felt weak and blank;
   Like a sharp strengthening wine it drank
The stillness and the broken lights.

Twelve struck. That sound, by dwindling years
   Heard in each hour, crept off; and then

The ruffled silence spread again,
Like water that a pebble stirs.

Our mother rose from where she sat;
Her needles, as she laid them down,
Met lightly, and her silken gown
Settled—no other noise than that.

"Glory unto the Newly Born!"
So, as said angels, she did say,
Because we were in Christmas Day,
Though it would still be long till morn.

Just then in the room over us
There was a pushing back of chairs,
As some who had sat unawares
So late, now heard the hour, and rose.

With anxious softly-stepping haste
Our mother went where Margaret lay,
Fearing the sounds o'erhead—should they
Have broken her long watched-for rest!

She stooped an instant, calm, and turned,
But suddenly turned back again;
And all her features seemed in pain
With woe, and her eyes gazed and yearned.

For my part, I but hid my face,
And held my breath, and spoke no word.
There was none spoken; but I heard
The silence for a little space.

Our mother bowed herself and wept;
And both my arms fell, and I said,
"God knows I knew that she was dead."
And there, all white, my sister slept.

Then kneeling, upon Christmas morn
A little after twelve o’clock,
We said, ere the first quarter struck,
“Christ’s blessing on the newly born!”

1847 1850

Endnotes

- Note 1: The incident in this poem is imaginary, not autobiographical.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *because of*Return to reference °

Jenny

Vengeance of Jenny's case! Fie on her! Never name her, child!
—(Mrs. Quickly.)[1]

Lazy laughing languid Jenny,
Fond of a kiss and fond of a guinea,[2]
Whose head upon my knee to-night
Rests for a while, as if grown light
With all our dances and the sound
To which the wild tunes spun you round:
Fair Jenny mine, the thoughtless queen
Of kisses which the blush between
Could hardly make much daintier;
Whose eyes are as blue skies, whose hair
Is countless gold incomparable:
Fresh flower, scarce touched with signs that tell
Of Love's exuberant hotbed:—Nay,
Poor flower left torn since yesterday
Until to-morrow leave you bare;
Poor handful of bright spring-water
Flung in the whirlpool's shrieking face;
Poor shameful Jenny, full of grace[3]
Thus with your head upon my knee;—
Whose person or whose purse may be
The lodestar° of your reverie?

This room of yours, my Jenny, looks
A change from mine so full of books,
Whose serried[4] ranks hold fast, forsooth,
So many captive hours of youth,—
The hours they thieve from day and night

To make one's cherished work come right,
And leave it wrong for all their theft,
Even as to-night my work was left:
Until I vowed that since my brain
And eyes of dancing seemed so fain,°
My feet should have some dancing too:—
And thus it was I met with you.
Well, I suppose 'twas hard to part,
For here I am. And now, sweetheart,
You seem too tired to get to bed.

It was a careless life I led
When rooms like this were scarce so strange
Not long ago. What breeds the change,—
The many aims or the few years?
Because to-night it all appears
Something I do not know again.

The cloud's not danced out of my brain—
The cloud that made it turn and swim
While hour by hour the books grew dim.
Why, Jenny, as I watch you there,—
For all your wealth of loosened hair,
Your silk ungirdled and unlac'd
And warm sweets open to the waist.
All golden in the lamplight's gleam,—
You know not what a book you seem,
Half-read by lightning in a dream!
How should you know, my Jenny? Nay,
And I should be ashamed to say:—
Poor beauty, so well worth a kiss!
But while my thought runs on like this
With wasteful whims more than enough,
I wonder what you're thinking of.

If of myself you think at all,

What is the thought?—conjectural
On sorry matters best unsolved?—
Or inly° is each grace revolved
To fit me with a lure?—or (sad
To think!) perhaps you're merely glad
That I'm not drunk or ruffianly
And let you rest upon my knee.

For sometimes, were the truth confess'd,
You're thankful for a little rest,—
Glad from the crush to rest within,
From the heart-sickness and the din
Where envy's voice at virtue's pitch
Mocks you because your gown is rich;
And from the pale girl's dumb rebuke,
Whose ill-clad grace and toil-worn look
Proclaim the strength that keeps her weak,
And other nights than yours bespeak;
And from the wise unchildish elf,
To schoolmate lesser than himself
Pointing you out, what thing you are:—
Yes, from the daily jeer and jar,
From shame and shame's outbraving too,
Is rest not sometimes sweet to you?—
But most from the hatefulness of man,
Who spares not to end what he began,
Whose acts are ill and his speech ill,
Who, having used you at his will,
Thrusts you aside, as when I dine
I serve° the dishes and the wine.

Well, handsome Jenny mine, sit up:
I've filled our glasses, let us sup,
And do not let me think of you,
Lest shame of yours suffice for two.
What, still so tired? Well, well then, keep

Your head there, so you do not sleep;
But that the weariness may pass
And leave you merry, take this glass.
Ah! lazy lily hand, more bless'd
If ne'er in rings it had been dress'd
Nor ever by a glove conceal'd!

Behold the lilies of the field,
They toil not neither do they spin;
(So doth the ancient text[5] begin,—
Not of such rest as one of these
Can share.) Another rest and ease
Along each summer-sated path
From its new lord the garden hath,
Than that whose spring in blessings ran
Which praised the bounteous husbandman,°
Ere yet, in days of hankering breath,
The lilies sickened unto death.

What, Jenny, are your lilies dead?
Aye, and the snow-white leaves are spread
Like winter on the garden-bed.
But you had roses left in May,—
They were not gone too. Jenny, nay,
But must your roses die, and those
Their purfled[6] buds that should unclose?
Even so; the leaves are curled apart,
Still red as from the broken heart,
And here's the naked stem of thorns.

Nay, nay, mere words. Here nothing warns
As yet of winter. Sickness here
Or want alone could waken fear,—
Nothing but passion wrings a tear.
Except when there may rise unsought
Haply at times a passing thought

Of the old days which seem to be
Much older than any history
That is written in any book;
When she would lie in fields and look
Along the ground through the blown grass
And wonder where the city was,
Far out of sight, whose broil and bale° [°]
They told her then for a child's tale.

Jenny, you know the city now.
A child can tell the tale there, how
Some things which are not yet enroll'd
In market-lists are bought and sold
Even till the early Sunday light,
When Saturday night is market-night
Everywhere, be it dry or wet,
And market-night in the Haymarket.[7]
Our learned London children know,
Poor Jenny, all your pride and woe;
Have seen your lifted silken skirt
Advertise dainties through the dirt;
Have seen your coach-wheels splash rebuke
On virtue; and have learned your look
When, wealth and health slipped past, you stare
Along the streets alone, and there,
Round the long park, across the bridge,
The cold lamps at the pavement's edge
Wind on together and apart,
A fiery serpent for your heart.

Let the thoughts pass, an empty cloud I
Suppose I were to think aloud,—
What if to her all this were said?
Why, as a volume seldom read
Being opened halfway shuts again,
So might the pages of her brain

Be parted at such words, and thence
Close back upon the dusty sense.
For is there hue or shape defin'd
In Jenny's desecrated mind,
Where all contagious currents meet,
A Lethe[8] of the middle street?
Nay, it reflects not any face,
Nor sound is in its sluggish pace,
But as they coil those eddies° clot,
And night and day remember not.

Why, Jenny, you're asleep at last!—
Asleep, poor Jenny, hard and fast,—
So young and soft and tired; so fair,
With chin thus nestled in your hair,
Mouth quiet, eyelids almost blue
As if some sky of dreams shone through!

Just as another woman sleeps!
Enough to throw one's thoughts in heaps
Of doubt and horror,—what to say
Or think,—this awful secret sway,
The potter's power over the clay!
Of the same lump (it has been said)
For honour and dishonour made,[9]
Two sister vessels. Here is one.

My cousin Nell is fond of fun,
And fond of dress, and change, and praise,
So mere a woman in her ways:
And if her sweet eyes rich in youth
Are like her lips that tell the truth,
My cousin Nell is fond of love.
And she's the girl I'm proudest of.
Who does not prize her, guard her well?
The love of change, in cousin Nell,

Shall find the best and hold it dear:
The unconquered mirth turn quieter
Not through her own, through others' woe:
The conscious pride of beauty glow
Beside another's pride in her,
One little part of all they share.
For Love himself shall ripen these
In a kind soil to just increase
Through years of fertilizing peace.

Of the same lump (as it is said)
For honour and dishonour made,
Two sister vessels. Here is one.

It makes a goblin[1] of the sun.

So pure,—so fall'n! How dare to think
Of the first common kindred link?
Yet, Jenny, till the world shall burn
It seems that all things take their turn;
And who shall say but this fair tree
May need, in changes that may be,
Your children's children's charity?
Scorned then, no doubt, as you are scorn'd!
Shall no man hold his pride forewarn'd
Till in the end, the Day of Days,
At Judgment, one of his own race,
As frail and lost as you, shall rise,—
His daughter, with his mother's eyes?

How Jenny's clock ticks on the shelf!
Might not the dial scorn itself
That has such hours to register?
Yet as to me, even so to her
Are golden sun and silver moon,
In daily largesse of earth's boon,

Counted for life-coins to one tune.
And if, as blindfold fates are toss'd,
Through some one man this life be lost,
Shall soul not somehow pay for soul?

Fair shines the gilded aureole[°]
In which our highest painters place
Some living woman's simple face.
And the stilled features thus descried
As Jenny's long throat droops aside,—
The shadows where the cheeks are thin,
And pure wide curve from ear to chin,—
With Raffael's, Leonardo's[2] hand
To show them to men's souls, might stand,
Whole ages long, the whole world through,
For preachings of what God can do.
What has man done here? How atone,
Great God, for this which man has done?
And for the body and soul which by
Man's pitiless doom must now comply
With lifelong hell, what lullaby
Of sweet forgetful second birth
Remains? All dark. No sign on earth
What measure of God's rest endows
The many mansions of his house.[3]

If but a woman's heart might see
Such erring heart unerringly
For once! But that can never be.

Like a rose shut in a book
In which pure women may not look,
For its base pages claim control
To crush the flower within the soul;
Where through each dead rose-leaf that clings,
Pale as transparent Psyche-wings,[4]

To the vile text, are traced such things
As might make lady's cheek indeed
More than a living rose to read;
So nought save foolish foulness may
Watch with hard eyes the sure decay:
And so the life-blood of this rose,
Puddled with shameful knowledge, flows
Through leaves no chaste hand may unclose;
Yet still it keeps such faded show
Of when 'twas gathered long ago,
That the crushed petals' lovely grain,
The sweetness of the sanguine° stain,
Seen of a woman's eyes, must make
Her pitiful heart, so prone to ache,
Love roses better for its sake:—
Only that this can never be:—
Even so unto her sex is she.

Yet, Jenny, looking long at you,
The woman almost fades from view.
A cipher of man's changeless sum
Of lust, past, present, and to come,
Is left. A riddle that one shrinks
To challenge from the scornful sphinx.[5]

Like a toad within a stone
Seated while Time crumbles on;
Which sits there since the earth was curs'd
For Man's transgression at the first;
Which, living through all centuries,
Not once has seen the sun arise;
Whose life, to its cold circle charmed,
The earth's whole summers have not warmed;
Which always—whitherso the stone
Be flung—sits there, deaf, blind, alone;—
Aye, and shall not be driven out

Till that which shuts him round about
Break at the very Master's stroke,
And the dust thereof vanish as smoke,
And the seed of Man vanish as dust:—
Even so within this world is Lust.

Come, come, what use in thoughts like this?
Poor little Jenny, good to kiss,—
You'd not believe by what strange roads
Thought travels, when your beauty goads
A man to-night to think of toads!
Jenny, wake up . . . Why, there's the dawn!

And there's an early waggon drawn
To market, and some sheep that jog
Bleating before a barking dog;
And the old streets come peering through
Another night that London knew;
And all as ghostlike as the lamps.

So on the wings of day decamps
My last night's frolic. Glooms begin
To shiver off as lights creep in
Past the gauze curtains half drawn-to,
And the lamp's doubled shade grows blue,—
Your lamp, my Jenny, kept alight,
Like a wise virgin's, all one night![6]
And in the alcove coolly spread
Glimmers with dawn your empty bed;
And yonder your fair face I see
Reflected lying on my knee,
Where teems with first foreshadowings
Your pier-glass[7] scrawled with diamond rings:
And on your bosom all night worn
Yesterday's rose now droops forlorn,
But dies not yet this summer morn.

And now without, as if some word
Had called upon them that they heard,
The London sparrows far and nigh
Clamour together suddenly;
And Jenny's cage-bird grown awake
Here in their song his part must take,
Because here too the day doth break.

And somehow in myself the dawn
Among stirred clouds and veils withdrawn
Strikes greyly on her. Let her sleep.
But will it wake her if I heap
These cushions thus beneath her head
Where my knee was? No,—there's your bed,
My Jenny, while you dream. And there
I lay among your golden hair,
Perhaps the subject of your dreams,
These golden coins.
For still one deems
That Jenny's flattering sleep confers
New magic on the magic purse,—
Grim web, how clogged with shrivelled flies!
Between the threads fine fumes arise
And shape their pictures in the brain.
There roll no streets in glare and rain.
Nor flagrant man-swine whets his tusk;
But delicately sighs in musk
The homage of the dim boudoir;
Or like a palpitating star
Thrilled into song, the opera-night
Breathes faint in the quick pulse of light;
Or at the carriage-window shine
Rich wares for choice; or, free to dine,
Whirls through its hour of health (divine
For her) the concourse of the Park.

And though in the discounted dark
Her functions there and here are one,
Beneath the lamps and in the sun
There reigns at least the acknowledged belle
Apparelled beyond parallel.
Ah Jenny, yes, we know your dreams.

For even the Paphian[8] Venus seems
A goddess o'er the realms of love,
When silver-shrined in shadowy grove:
Aye, or let offerings nicely plac'd
But hide Priapus[9] to the waist,
And whoso looks on him shall see
An eligible deity.

Why, Jenny, waking here alone
May help you to remember one,
Though all the memory's long outworn
Of many a double-pillowed morn.
I think I see you when you wake,
And rub your eyes for me, and shake
My gold, in rising, from your hair,
A Danaë[1] for a moment there.

Jenny, my love rang true! for still
Love at first sight is vague, until
That tinkling makes him audible.

And must I mock you to the last,
Ashamed of my own shame,—aghast
Because some thoughts not born amiss
Rose at a poor fair face like this?
Well, of such thoughts so much I know:
In my life, as in hers, they show,
By a far gleam which I may near,
A dark path I can strive to clear.

390 Only one kiss. Good-bye, my dear.

1848 1870

Endnotes

- Note 1: Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* 4.1.53–54. Mistress Quickly continues: "if she be a whore."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: English gold coin worth twenty-one shillings.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Allusion to the first line of the prayer to the Virgin Mary: "Hail Mary, full of grace."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Pressed close together.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Matthew 6:28.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: With a decorative edging.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Street in London frequented by prostitutes.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The river of forgetfulness in the Greek underworld. Gutters in London often ran through the middle of the street.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Romans 9:21: "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A gold coin (slang).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The painters Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio, 1483–1520) and Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Compare with John 14:2: "In my Father's house are many mansions."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The soul, often symbolized by a butterfly that escaped the body after death. Also, in the well-known story told by Apuleius (*The Golden Ass,* 2nd century C.E.), Psyche was a maiden beloved by Cupid.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: In Greek mythology a monster with a lion's body, bird's wings, and woman's face. The answer to her riddle—what walks

on four legs in the morning, two at noon, and three in the evening?—is man, at different ages.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Compare with Matthew 25:1–13. In the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, the wise virgins took sufficient oil to keep their lamps burning all night.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A mirror. Lovers would scratch their names on it with the diamonds in their rings.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Of Paphos, a city on Cyprus that was the site of a famous temple of Aphrodite (the Roman Venus). Also, a term for prostitute.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A Greek fertility god, whose symbol was the phallus.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In Greek mythology a maiden whom Zeus visited in the form of a shower of gold.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *guiding star*Return to reference °
- °: *desirous*Return to reference °
- °: *inwardly*Return to reference °
- °: *treat*Return to reference °
- °: *farmer*Return to reference °
- °: *turmoil and evil*Return to reference °
- °: *small whirlpools*Return to reference °
- °: *halo*Return to reference °
- °: *bloodred*Return to reference °

From The House of Life

The Sonnet

A Sonnet is a moment's monument—
  Memorial from the Soul's eternity
  To one dead deathless hour. Look that it be,
Whether for lustral° rite or dire portent,
Of its own arduous fullness reverent;
  Carve it in ivory or in ebony,
  As Day or Night may rule; and let Time see
Its flowering crest impearled and orient.

A Sonnet is a coin; its face reveals
  The soul—its converse, to what Power 'tis due—
Whether for tribute to the august appeals
  Of Life, or dower in Love's high retinue,
It serve; or, 'mid the dark wharf's cavernous breath,
In Charon's[1] palm it pay the toll to Death.

Endnotes

- Note 1: In classical mythology the ferryman who, for a fee, rowed the souls of the dead across the river Styx.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *purificatory*Return to reference °

Nuptial Sleep[2]

At length their long kiss severed, with sweet smart:[°]
And as the last slow sudden drops are shed
From sparkling eaves when all the storm has fled,
So singly flagged the pulses of each heart.
Their bosoms sundered, with the opening start
Of married flowers to either side outspread
From the knit stem; yet still their mouths, burnt red,
Fawned on each other where they lay apart.

Sleep sank them lower than the tide of dreams,
And their dreams watched them sink, and slid away.
Slowly their souls swam up again, through gleams
Of watered light and dull drowned waifs of day;
Till from some wonder of new woods and streams
He woke, and wondered more: for there she lay.

Endnotes

- Note 2: In "The Fleshly School of Poetry" (1871), Robert Buchanan made this poem the focus of his attack on what he felt was Rossetti's lewd sensuality in the 1870 volume *Poems.* In 1881, when Rossetti published his next collection of poems, he omitted this sonnet from *The House of Life.*Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *pain*Return to reference °

Silent Noon

Your hands lie open in the long fresh grass—
  The finger-points look through like rosy blooms;
  Your eyes smile peace. The pasture gleams and glooms
'Neath billowing skies that scatter and amass.
All round our nest, far as the eye can pass,
  Are golden kingcup-fields with silver edge
  Where the cow-parsley skirts the hawthorn hedge.
'Tis visible silence, still as the hourglass.

Deep in the sun-searched growths the dragonfly
Hangs like a blue thread loosened from the sky—
  So this winged hour is dropped to us from above.
Oh! clasp we to our hearts, for deathless dower,
This close-companioned inarticulate hour
  When twofold silence was the song of love.

Soul's Beauty[3]

Under the arch of Life, where love and death,
  Terror and mystery, guard her shrine, I saw
  Beauty enthroned; and though her gaze struck awe,
I drew it in as simply as my breath.
Hers are the eyes which, over and beneath,
  The sky and sea bend on thee,—which can draw,
  By sea or sky or woman, to one law,
The allotted bondman° of her palm and wreath.

This is that Lady Beauty, in whose praise
  Thy voice and hand shake still,—long known to thee
    By flying hair and fluttering hem,—the beat
    Following her daily of thy heart and feet,
  How passionately and irretrievably,
In what fond flight, how many ways and days!

Endnotes

- Note 3: This sonnet and the next were not originally part of *The House of Life,* but were composed to accompany paintings with the same names as the sonnets' original titles (see the color insert). The original title of "Soul's Beauty" was "Sibylla Palmifera," or "palm-bearing sibyl." Sibyls are prophetesses; one of them, the Sibyl of Cumae, wrote her prophecies on palm leaves. The original title of "Body's Beauty" was "Lilith"; in Talmudic legend, Lilith, Adam's first wife, ran away from her husband and became a witch.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *slave*Return to reference °

Body's Beauty

Of Adams's first wife, Lilith, it is told
(The witch he loved before the gift of Eve,)
That, ere the snake's, her sweet tongue could deceive,
And her enchanted hair was the first gold.
And still she sits, young while the earth is old,
And subtly of herself contemplative,
Draws men to watch the bright web she can weave,
Till heart and body and life are in its hold.

The rose and poppy are her flowers; for where
Is he not found, O Lilith, whom shed scent
And soft-shed kisses and soft sleep shall snare?
Lo! as that youth's eyes burned at thine, so went
Thy spell through him, and left his straight neck bent
And round his heart one strangling golden hair.

1848–80 1870, 1881

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI
1830–1894

Christina Rossetti, the youngest of four siblings, grew up in a home that actively engaged with the arts and liberal politics. Her father was an exiled Italian patriot who wrote poetry and commentaries on Dante that tried to find evidence in his poems of mysterious ancient conspiracies; her mother was an Anglo-Italian who had worked as a governess. Their household was a lively gathering place for Italian exiles, full of conversation of politics and culture; and Christina, like her brothers Dante Gabriel and William Michael, was encouraged to develop a love for art and literature and to draw and write poetry from a very early age. When she was an adolescent, her life changed dramatically: her father became a permanent invalid, the family's economic situation worsened, and her own health deteriorated. Subsequently she, her mother, and her sister Maria became intensely involved with the Anglo-Catholic movement within the Church of England. For the rest of her life, Rossetti governed herself by strict religious principles, giving up theater, opera, and chess; on two occasions she canceled plans for marriage because of religious scruples, breaking her first engagement when her fiancé reverted to Roman Catholicism and ultimately refusing to marry a second suitor because he seemed insufficiently concerned with religion. She lived a quiet life, occupying herself with charitable work —including ten years of volunteer service at a penitentiary for "fallen" women—with caring for her family, and with writing poetry.

Rossetti's first volume of poetry, *Goblin Market and Other Poems* (1862), contains all the different poetic modes that mark her achievement—pure lyric, narrative fable, ballad, and the devotional verse to which she increasingly turned in her later years. The most remarkable poem in the book is the title piece, which early established its popularity as a seemingly simple moral fable for children. Later readers have likened it to Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) and have detected in it a complex representation of the religious themes of temptation and sin, and of redemption by vicarious suffering; the fruit that tempts Laura, however, clearly is not from the tree of knowledge but from the orchard of sensual delights. In its deceptively simple style, *Goblin Market,* like many of Rossetti's poems, demonstrates her affinity with the early aims of the Pre-Raphaelite group, though her work as a whole resists this classification. A consciousness of gender often leads her to criticize the conventional representation of women in Pre-Raphaelite art, as in her sonnet "In an Artist's Studio" (1896), and a stern religious vision controls the sensuous impulses typical of Pre-Raphaelite poetry and painting. Virginia Woolf has described the distinctive combination of sensuousness and religious severity in Rossetti's work:

> Your poems are full of gold dust and "sweet geraniums' varied brightness"; your eye noted incessantly how rushes are "velvet headed," and lizards have a "strange metallic mail"—your eye, indeed, observed with a sensual pre-Raphaelite intensity that must have surprised Christina the Anglo-Catholic. But to her you owed perhaps the fixity and sadness of your muse. . . . No sooner have you feasted on beauty with your eyes than your mind tells you that beauty is vain and beauty passes. Death, oblivion, and rest lap round your songs with their dark wave.

William Michael Rossetti wrote of his sister, "She was replete with the spirit of self-postponement." Christina Rossetti was a poet who created, in Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's phrase, "an

aesthetics of renunciation." She writes a poetry of deferral, of deflection, of negation, whose very denials and constraints give her a powerful way to articulate a poetic self in critical relationship to the little that the world offers. Like Emily Dickinson, she often, as in "Winter: My Secret" (1862), uses a coy playfulness and sardonic wit to reduce the self but at the same time to preserve for it a secret inner space. And like Dickinson, she wrote many poems of an extraordinarily pure lyric beauty that made Woolf also compare Rossetti's work to that of classical composers: "Your instinct was so sure, so direct, so intense that it produced poems that sing like music in one's ears—like a melody by Mozart or an air by Gluck."

Song

She sat and sang alway
  By the green margin of a stream,
Watching the fishes leap and play
  Beneath the glad sunbeam.

I sat and wept alway
  Beneath the moon's most shadowy beam,
Watching the blossoms of the May
  Weep leaves into the stream.

I wept for memory;
  She sang for hope that is so fair:
My tears were swallowed by the sea;
  Her songs died on the air.

1848 1862

Song

When I am dead, my dearest,
  Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
  Nor shady cypress tree:[1]
Be the green grass above me
  With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt, remember,
  And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
  I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
  Sing on, as if in pain:
And dreaming through the twilight
  That doth not rise nor set,
Haply° I may remember,
  And haply may forget.

1848 1862

Endnotes

- Note 1: The cypress tree is associated with mourning.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *perhaps*Return to reference °

After Death

The curtains were half drawn, the floor was swept
And strewn with rushes, rosemary and may[1]
Lay thick upon the bed on which I lay,
Where thro' the lattice ivy-shadows crept.
He leaned above me, thinking that I slept
And could not hear him; but I heard him say:
"Poor child, poor child": and as he turned away
Came a deep silence, and I knew he wept.
He did not touch the shroud, or raise the fold
That hid my face, or take my hand in his,
Or ruffle the smooth pillows for my head:
He did not love me living; but once dead
He pitied me; and very sweet it is
To know he still is warm tho' I am cold.

1849 1862

Endnotes

- Note 1: Plants associated with death.Return to reference 1

Dead before Death

Ah! changed and cold, how changed and very cold!
With stiffened smiling lips and cold calm eyes:
Changed, yet the same; much knowing, little wise;
This was the promise of the days of old!
Grown hard and stubborn in the ancient mould,
Grown rigid in the sham of lifelong lies:
We hoped for better things as years would rise,
But it is over as a tale once told.
All fallen the blossom that no fruitage bore,
All lost the present and the future time,
All lost, all lost, the lapse that went before:
So lost till death shut-to the opened door,
So lost from chime to everlasting chime,
So cold and lost for ever evermore.

1854 1862

Cobwebs

It is a land with neither night nor day,
Nor heat nor cold, nor any wind, nor rain,
Nor hills nor valleys; but one even plain
Stretches thro’ long unbroken miles away:
While thro’ the sluggish air a twilight grey
Broodeth; no moons or seasons wax and wane,
No ebb and flow are there along the main,°
No bud-time no leaf-falling, there for aye:°—
No ripple on the sea, no shifting sand,
No beat of wings to stir the stagnant space,
No pulse of life thro’ all the loveless land:
And loveless sea; no trace of days before,
No guarded home, no toil-won resting place,
No future hope no fear for evermore.

1855 1896

Notes

- °: *ocean*Return to reference °
- °: *forever*Return to reference °

A Triad

Three sang of love together: one with lips
  Crimson, with cheeks and bosom in a glow,
Flushed to the yellow hair and finger tips;
  And one there sang who soft and smooth as snow
  Bloomed like a tinted hyacinth at a show;
And one was blue with famine after love,
  Who like a harpstring snapped rang harsh and low
The burden of what those were singing of.
One shamed herself in love; one temperately
  Grew gross in soulless love, a sluggish wife;
One famished died for love. Thus two of three
  Took death for love and won him after strife;
One droned in sweetness like a fattened bee:
  All on the threshold, yet all short of life.

1856 1862

In an Artist's Studio[1]

One face looks out from all his canvases,
  One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans;
  We found her hidden just behind those screens,
That mirror gave back all her loveliness.
A queen in opal or in ruby dress,
  A nameless girl in freshest summer-greens,
  A saint, an angel;—every canvas means
The same one meaning, neither more nor less.
He feeds upon her face by day and night,
  And she with true kind eyes looks back on him
Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:
  Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;
Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright;
  Not as she is, but as she fills his dream.

1856 1896

Endnotes

- Note 1: According to Christina's brother William Michael, this poem focuses on the work of their older brother, Dante Gabriel: "The reference is apparently to our brother's studio, and to his constantly repeated heads of the lady whom he afterwards married, Miss Siddal."Return to reference 1

A Birthday

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a watered shoot;°
My heart is like an apple tree
Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon° sea;
My heart is gladder than all these
Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;
Hang it with vair° and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me.

1857 1862

Notes

- °: *slim branch* Return to reference °
- °: *tranquil* Return to reference °
- °: *squirrel fur* Return to reference °

An Apple-Gathering

I plucked pink blossoms from mine apple tree
  And wore them all that evening in my hair:
Then in due season when I went to see
    I found no apples there.

With dangling basket all along the grass
  As I had come I went the selfsame track:
My neighbours mocked me while they saw me pass
    So empty-handed back.

Lilian and Lilias smiled in trudging by,
  Their heaped-up basket teazed me like a jeer;
Sweet-voiced they sang beneath the sunset sky,
    Their mother's home was near.

Plump Gertrude passed me with her basket full,
  A stronger hand than hers helped it along;
A voice talked with her thro' the shadows cool
    More sweet to me than song.

Ah Willie, Willie, was my love less worth
  Than apples with their green leaves piled above?
I counted rosiest apples on the earth
    Of far less worth than love.

So once it was with me you stooped to talk
  Laughing and listening in this very lane:
To think that by this way we used to walk
    We shall not walk again!

I let my neighbours pass me, ones and twos
  And groups; the latest said the night grew chill,

And hastened: but I loitered, while the dews
Fell fast I loitered still.

1857 1862

Winter: My Secret

I tell my secret? No indeed, not I:
Perhaps some day, who knows?
But not today; it froze, and blows, and snows,
And you're too curious: fie!
You want to hear it? well:
Only, my secret's mine, and I won't tell.

Or, after all, perhaps there's none:
Suppose there is no secret after all,
But only just my fun.
Today's a nipping day, a biting day;
In which one wants a shawl,
A veil, a cloak, and other wraps:
I cannot ope to every one who taps,
And let the draughts come whistling thro' my hall;
Come bounding and surrounding me,
Come buffeting, astounding me,
Nipping and clipping thro' my wraps and all.
I wear my mask for warmth: who ever shows
His nose to Russian snows
To be pecked at by every wind that blows?
You would not peck? I thank you for good will,
Believe, but leave that truth untested still.

Spring's an expansive time: yet I don't trust
March with its peck of dust,
Nor April with its rainbow-crowned brief showers,
Nor even May, whose flowers
One frost may wither thro' the sunless hours.

Perhaps some languid summer day,

When drowsy birds sing less and less,
And golden fruit is ripening to excess,
If there's not too much sun nor too much cloud,
And the warm wind is neither still nor loud,
Perhaps my secret I may say,
Or you may guess.

1857 1862

Up-Hill

Does the road wind up-hill all the way?
Yes, to the very end.
Will the day's journey take the whole long day?
From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting-place?
A roof for when the slow dark hours begin.
May not the darkness hide it from my face?
You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?
Those who have gone before.
Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?
They will not keep you standing at that door.

Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?
Of labour you shall find the sum.
Will there be beds for me and all who seek?
Yea, beds for all who come.

1858 1862

Goblin Market

Morning and evening
Maids heard the goblins cry:
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy:
Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges,
Plump unpecked cherries,
Melons and raspberries,
Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,
Swart-headed mulberries,
Wild free-born cranberries,
Crab-apples, dewberries,
Pine-apples, blackberries,
Apricots, strawberries;—
All ripe together
In summer weather,—
Morns that pass by,
Fair eves that fly;
Come buy, come buy:
Our grapes fresh from the vine,
Pomegranates full and fine,
Dates and sharp bullaces,
Rare pears and greengages,
Damsons[1] and bilberries,
Taste them and try:
Currants and gooseberries,
Bright-fire-like barberries,
Figs to fill your mouth,
Citrons from the South,
Sweet to tongue and sound to eye;
Come buy, come buy."

Evening by evening
Among the brookside rushes,
Laura bowed her head to hear,
Lizzie veiled her blushes:
Crouching close together
In the cooling weather,
With clasping arms and cautioning lips,
With tingling cheeks and finger tips.
"Lie close," Laura said,
Pricking up her golden head:
"We must not look at goblin men,
We must not buy their fruits:
Who knows upon what soil they fed
Their hungry thirsty roots?"
"Come buy," call the goblins
Hobbling down the glen.
"Oh," cried Lizzie, "Laura, Laura,
You should not peep at goblin men."
Lizzie covered up her eyes,
Covered close lest they should look;
Laura reared her glossy head,
And whispered like the restless brook:
"Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie,
Down the glen tramp little men.
One hauls a basket,
One bears a plate,
One lugs a golden dish
Of many pounds weight.
How fair the vine must grow
Whose grapes are so luscious;
How warm the wind must blow
Thro' those fruit bushes."
"No," said Lizzie: "No, no, no;
Their offers should not charm us,
Their evil gifts would harm us."

She thrust a dimpled finger
In each ear, shut eyes and ran:
Curious Laura chose to linger
Wondering at each merchant man.
One had a cat's face,
One whisked a tail,
One tramped at a rat's pace,
One crawled like a snail,
One like a wombat prowled obtuse and furry,
One like a ratel[2] tumbled hurry skurry.
She heard a voice like voice of doves
Cooing all together:
They sounded kind and full of loves
In the pleasant weather.

Laura stretched her gleaming neck
Like a rush-imbedded swan,
Like a lily from the beck,°
Like a moonlit poplar branch,
Like a vessel at the launch
When its last restraint is gone.

Backwards up the mossy glen
Turned and trooped the goblin men,
With their shrill repeated cry,
"Come buy, come buy."
When they reached where Laura was
They stood stock still upon the moss,
Leering at each other,
Brother with queer brother;
Signalling each other,
Brother with sly brother.
One set his basket down,
One reared° his plate;
One began to weave a crown
Of tendrils, leaves and rough nuts brown

(Men sell not such in any town);
One heaved the golden weight
Of dish and fruit to offer her:
"Come buy, come buy," was still their cry.
Laura stared but did not stir,
Longed but had no money:
The whisk-tailed merchant bade her taste
In tones as smooth as honey,
The cat-faced purr'd,
The rat-paced spoke a word
Of welcome, and the snail-paced even was heard;
One parrot-voiced and jolly
Cried "Pretty Goblin" still° for "Pretty Polly;"—
One whistled like a bird.

But sweet-tooth Laura spoke in haste:
"Good folk, I have no coin;
To take were to purloin:
I have no copper in my purse,
I have no silver either,
And all my gold is on the furze[3]
That shakes in windy weather
Above the rusty heather."
"You have much gold upon your head,"
They answered all together:
"Buy from us with a golden curl."
She clipped a precious golden lock,
She dropped a tear more rare than pearl,
Then sucked their fruit globes fair or red:
Sweeter than honey from the rock.[4]
Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,[5]
Clearer than water flowed that juice;
She never tasted such before,
How should it cloy with length of use?
She sucked and sucked and sucked the more
Fruits which that unknown orchard bore;

She sucked until her lips were sore;
Then flung the emptied rinds away
But gathered up one kernel-stone,
And knew not was it night or day
As she turned home alone.

Lizzie met her at the gate
Full of wise upbraidings:
"Dear, you should not stay so late,
Twilight is not good for maidens;
Should not loiter in the glen
In the haunts of goblin men.
Do you not remember Jeanie,
How she met them in the moonlight,
Took their gifts both choice and many,
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers
Plucked from bowers
Where summer ripens at all hours?
But ever in the noonlight
She pined and pined away;
Sought them by night and day,
Found them no more but dwindled and grew grey;
Then fell with the first snow,
While to this day no grass will grow
Where she lies low:
I planted daisies there a year ago
That never blow.°
You should not loiter so."
"Nay, hush," said Laura:
"Nay, hush, my sister:
I ate and ate my fill,
Yet my mouth waters still;
Tomorrow night I will
Buy more:" and kissed her:
"Have done with sorrow;
I'll bring you plums tomorrow

Fresh on their mother twigs,
Cherries worth getting;
You cannot think what figs
My teeth have met in,
What melons icy-cold
Piled on a dish of gold
Too huge for me to hold,
What peaches with a velvet nap,
Pellucid grapes without one seed:
Odorous indeed must be the mead
Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink
With lilies at the brink,
And sugar-sweet their sap."

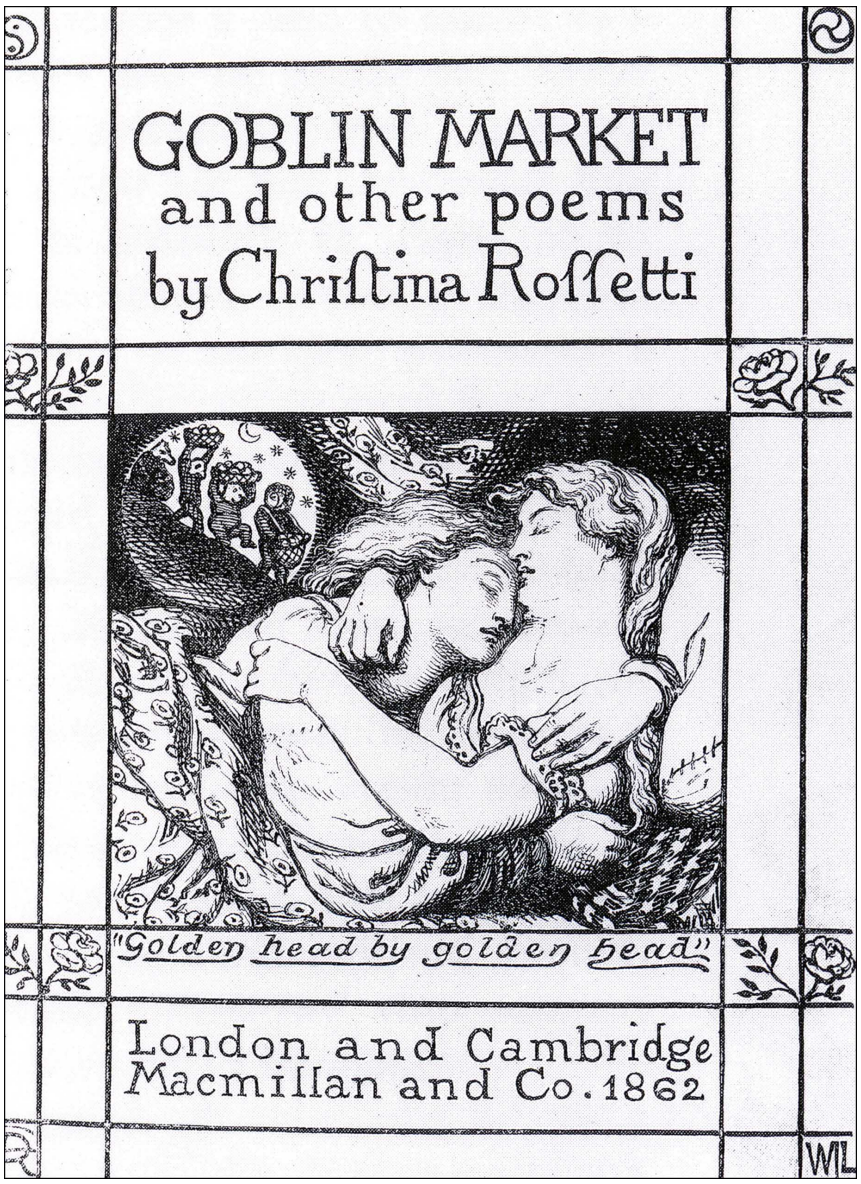
Golden head by golden head,
Like two pigeons in one nest
Folded in each other's wings,
They lay down in their curtained bed:
Like two blossoms on one stem,
Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,
Like two wands of ivory
Tipped with gold for awful° kings.
Moon and stars gazed in at them,
Wind sang to them lullaby,
Lumbering owls forbore to fly,
Not a bat flapped to and fro
Round their rest:
Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
Locked together in one nest.

Early in the morning
When the first cock crowed his warning,
Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,
Laura rose with Lizzie:
Fetched in honey, milked the cows,
Aired and set to rights the house,

Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,
Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
Next churned butter, whipped up cream,
Fed their poultry, sat and sewed;
Talked as modest maidens should:
Lizzie with an open heart,
Laura in an absent dream,
One content, one sick in part;
One warbling for the mere bright day's delight,
One longing for the night.

At length slow evening came:
They went with pitchers to the reedy brook;
Lizzie most placid in her look,
Laura most like a leaping flame.
They drew the gurgling water from its deep;
Lizzie plucked purple and rich golden flags,°
Then turning homewards said: "The sunset flushes
Those furthest loftiest crags;
Come, Laura, not another maiden lags,
No wilful squirrel wags,
The beasts and birds are fast asleep."
But Laura loitered still among the rushes
And said the bank was steep.

And said the hour was early still,
The dew not fall'n, the wind not chill:
Listening ever, but not catching
The customary cry,
"Come buy, come buy,"
With its iterated jingle
Of sugar-baited words:
Not for all her watching
Once discerning even one goblin



Goblin Market. This frontispiece is one of the two illustrations that Dante Gabriel Rossetti provided for his sister's first volume of poetry in 1862.

Racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling;
Let alone the herds
That used to tramp along the glen,
In groups or single,
240 Of brisk fruit-merchant men.

Till Lizzie urged, "O Laura, come;

I hear the fruit-call but I dare not look:
You should not loiter longer at this brook:
Come with me home.
The stars rise, the moon bends her arc,
Each glowworm winks her spark,
Let us get home before the night grows dark:
For clouds may gather
Tho' this is summer weather,
Put out the lights and drench us thro';
Then if we lost our way what should we do?"

Laura turned cold as stone
To find her sister heard that cry alone,
That goblin cry,
"Come buy our fruits, come buy."
Must she then buy no more such dainty fruit?
Must she no more such succous° pasture find,
Gone deaf and blind?
Her tree of life drooped from the root:
She said not one word in her heart's sore ache;
But peering thro' the dimness, nought discerning,
Trudged home, her pitcher dripping all the way;
So crept to bed, and lay
Silent till Lizzie slept;
Then sat up in a passionate yearning,
And gnashed her teeth for baulked desire, and wept
As if her heart would break.

Day after day, night after night,
Laura kept watch in vain
In sullen silence of exceeding pain.
She never caught again the goblin cry:
"Come buy, come buy;"—
She never spied the goblin men
Hawking their fruits along the glen:
But when the noon waxed bright

Her hair grew thin and gray;
She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn
To swift decay and burn
Her fire away.

One day remembering her kernel-stone
She set it by a wall that faced the south;
Dewed it with tears, hoped for a root,
Watched for a waxing shoot,
But there came none;
It never saw the sun,
It never felt the trickling moisture run:
While with sunk eyes and faded mouth
She dreamed of melons, as a traveller sees
False waves in desert drouth
With shade of leaf-crowned trees,
And burns the thirstier in the sandful breeze.

She no more swept the house,
Tended the fowls or cows,
Fetched honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,
Brought water from the brook:
But sat down listless in the chimney-nook
And would not eat.

Tender Lizzie could not bear
To watch her sister's cankerous care
Yet not to share.
She night and morning
Caught the goblins' cry:
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy:"—
Beside the brook, along the glen,
She heard the tramp of goblin men,
The voice and stir
Poor Laura could not hear;
Longed to buy fruit to comfort her,

But feared to pay too dear.
She thought of Jeanie in her grave,
Who should have been a bride;
But who for joys brides hope to have
Fell sick and died
In her gay prime,
In earliest Winter time,
With the first glazing rime,
With the first snow-fall of crisp Winter time.

Till Laura dwindling
Seemed knocking at Death's door:
Then Lizzie weighed° no more
Better and worse;
But put a silver penny in her purse,
Kissed Laura, crossed the heath with clumps of furze
At twilight, halted by the brook:
And for the first time in her life
Began to listen and look.

Laughed every goblin
When they spied her peeping:
Came towards her hobbling,
Flying, running, leaping,
Puffing and blowing,
Chuckling, clapping, crowing,
Clucking and gobbling,
Mopping and mowing,[6]
Full of airs and graces,
Pulling wry faces,
Demure grimaces,
Cat-like and rat-like,
Ratel-and wombat-like,
Snail-paced in a hurry,
Parrot-voiced and whistler,
Helter skelter, hurry skurry,

Chattering like magpies,
Fluttering like pigeons,
Gliding like fishes,—
Hugged her and kissed her,
Squeezed and caressed her:
Stretched up their dishes,
Panniers, and plates:
"Look at our apples
Russet and dun,
Bob at our cherries,
Bite at our peaches,
Citrons and dates,
Grapes for the asking,
Pears red with basking
Out in the sun,
Plums on their twigs;
Pluck them and suck them,
Pomegranates, figs."—

"Good folk," said Lizzie,
Mindful of Jeanie:
"Give me much and many:"—
Held out her apron,
Tossed them her penny.
"Nay, take a seat with us,
Honour and eat with us,"
They answered grinning:
"Our feast is but beginning.
Night yet is early,
Warm and dew-pearly,
Wakeful and starry:
Such fruits as these
No man can carry;
Half their bloom would fly,
Half their dew would dry,
Half their flavour would pass by.

Sit down and feast with us,
Be welcome guest with us,
Cheer you and rest with us.”—
“Thank you,” said Lizzie: “But one waits
At home alone for me:
So without further parleying,
If you will not sell me any
Of your fruits tho’ much and many,
Give me back my silver penny
I tossed you for a fee.”—

They began to scratch their pates,
No longer wagging, purring,
But visibly demurring,
Grunting and snarling.
One called her proud,
Cross-grained, uncivil;
Their tones waxed loud,
Their looks were evil.
Lashing their tails
They trod and hustled her,
Elbowed and jostled her,
Clawed with their nails,
Barking, mewing, hissing, mocking,
Tore her gown and soiled her stocking,
Twitched her hair out by the roots,
Stamped upon her tender feet,
Held her hands and squeezed their fruits
Against her mouth to make her eat.

White and golden Lizzie stood,
Like a lily in a flood,—
Like a rock of blue-veined stone
Lashed by tides obstreperously,—
Like a beacon left alone
In a hoary roaring sea,

Sending up a golden fire,—
Like a fruit-crowned orange-tree
White with blossoms honey-sweet
Sore beset by wasp and bee,—
Like a royal virgin town
Topped with gilded dome and spire
Close beleaguered by a fleet
Mad to tug her standard down.

One may lead a horse to water,
Twenty cannot make him drink.
Tho’ the goblins cuffed and caught her,
Coaxed and fought her,
Bullied and besought her,
Scratched her, pinched her black as ink,
Kicked and knocked her,
Mauled and mocked her,
Lizzie uttered not a word;
Would not open lip from lip
Lest they should cram a mouthful in:
But laughed in heart to feel the drip
Of juice that syruped all her face,
And lodged in dimples of her chin,
And streaked her neck which quaked like curd.
At last the evil people
Worn out by her resistance
Flung back her penny, kicked their fruit
Along whichever road they took,
Not leaving root or stone or shoot;
Some writhed into the ground,
Some dived into the brook
With ring and ripple,
Some scudded on the gale without a sound,
Some vanished in the distance.

In a smart, ache, tingle,

Lizzie went her way;
Knew not was it night or day;
Sprang up the bank, tore thro' the furze,
Threaded copse and dingle,
And heard her penny jingle
Bouncing in her purse,
Its bounce was music to her ear.
She ran and ran
As if she feared some goblin man
Dogged her with gibe or curse
Or something worse:
But not one goblin skurried after,
Nor was she pricked by fear;
The kind heart made her windy-paced
That urged her home quite out of breath with haste
And inward laughter.

She cried "Laura," up the garden,
"Did you miss me?
Come and kiss me.
Never mind my bruises,
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,
Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
Eat me, drink me, love me;
Laura, make much of me:
For your sake I have braved the glen
And had to do with goblin merchant men."

Laura started from her chair,
Flung her arms up in the air,
Clutched her hair:
"Lizzie, Lizzie, have you tasted
For my sake the fruit forbidden?
Must your light like mine be hidden,
Your young life like mine be wasted,

Undone in mine undoing
And ruined in my ruin,
Thirsty, cankered, goblin-ridden?”—
She clung about her sister,
Kissed and kissed and kissed her:
Tears once again
Refreshed her shrunken eyes,
Dropping like rain
After long sultry drouth;
Shaking with aguish° fear, and pain,
She kissed and kissed her with a hungry mouth.

Her lips began to scorch,
That juice was wormwood to her tongue,
She loathed the feast:
Writhing as one possessed she leaped and sung,
Rent all her robe, and wrung
Her hands in lamentable haste,
And beat her breast.
Her locks streamed like the torch
Borne by a racer at full speed,
Or like the mane of horses in their flight,
Or like an eagle when she stems[7] the light
Straight toward the sun,
Or like a caged thing freed,
Or like a flying flag when armies run.

Swift fire spread thro’ her veins, knocked at her heart,
Met the fire smouldering there
And overbore its lesser flame;
She gorged on bitterness without a name:
Ah! fool, to choose such part
Of soul-consuming care!
Sense failed in the mortal strife:
Like the watch-tower of a town
Which an earthquake shatters down,

Like a lightning-stricken mast,
Like a wind-uprooted tree
Spun about,
Like a foam-topped waterspout
Cast down headlong in the sea,
She fell at last;
Pleasure past and anguish past,
Is it death or is it life?

Life out of death.
That night long Lizzie watched by her,
Counted her pulse's flagging stir,
Felt for her breath,
Held water to her lips, and cooled her face
With tears and fanning leaves:
But when the first birds chirped about their eaves,
And early reapers plodded to the place
Of golden sheaves,
And dew-wet grass
Bowed in the morning winds so brisk to pass,
And new buds with new day
Opened of cup-like lilies on the stream,
Laura awoke as from a dream,
Laughed in the innocent old way,
Hugged Lizzie but not° twice or thrice;
Her gleaming locks showed not one thread of grey,
Her breath was sweet as May
And light danced in her eyes.

Days, weeks, months, years
Afterwards, when both were wives
With children of their own;
Their mother-hearts beset with fears,
Their lives bound up in tender lives;
Laura would call the little ones
And tell them of her early prime,

Those pleasant days long gone
Of not-returning time:
Would talk about the haunted glen,
The wicked, quaint° fruit-merchant men,
Their fruits like honey to the throat
But poison in the blood;
(Men sell not such in any town:)
Would tell them how her sister stood
In deadly peril to do her good,
And win the fiery antidote:
Then joining hands to little hands
Would bid them cling together,
"For there is no friend like a sister
In calm or stormy weather;
To cheer one on the tedious way,
To fetch one if one goes astray,
To lift one if one totters down,
To strengthen whilst one stands."

1859 1862

Endnotes

- Note 1: Bullaces, greengages, and damsons are varieties of plums.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: South African mammal resembling a badger (pronounced *ray-tell).*Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Gorse; a wild shrub with thorns and small yellow flowers.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Psalms 81:16.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Psalms 104:15.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Grimacing, making faces.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Makes headway against.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *small brook*Return to reference °

- °: *raised* Return to reference °
- °: *always* Return to reference °
- °: *bloom* Return to reference °
- °: *awe-inspiring* Return to reference °
- °: *irises* Return to reference °
- °: *juicy, succulent* Return to reference °
- °: *evaluated, considered* Return to reference °
- °: *feverish* Return to reference °
- °: *not only* Return to reference °
- °: *strange* Return to reference °

The Round Tower at Jhansi—June 8, 1857[1]

A hundred, a thousand to one; even so;
  Not a hope in the world remained;
The swarming, howling wretches below
  Gained, and gained, and gained.

S—— look'd at his pale young wife:—
  "Is the time come?" "The time *is* come."
Young, strong, and so full of life;
  The agony struck them dumb.

"Will it hurt much?" "No, mine own;
  I wish I could bear the pang for both."
"I wish I could bear the pang alone:
  Courage, dear! I am not loth."

Kiss and kiss: "It is not pain
  Thus to kiss and die.
One kiss more." "And yet one again."
  "Goodbye." "Goodbye."

1862

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  This poem misrepresents an event from the Indian Uprising of 1857. The poem was written in September 1857. It was printed first in 1859, again in 1862, and a third time in 1875. In the 1862 reprinting of the poem, Rossetti added the following stanza in the middle of the poem: "Close his arm about her

now, / Close her cheek to his, / Close the pistol to her brow— / God forgive them this!”

In 1875, Rossetti removed the added stanza and added this note: “I retain this little poem, not as historically accurate, but as written and published before I heard the supposed facts of its first verse contradicted.” Rossetti is referring to false reports that the British superintendent of the Jhansi District, Captain Alexander Skene, shot his wife and himself before they could be seized by insurgents. Instead, Skene surrendered only then to be shot along with his wife.

Return to reference 1

“No, Thank You, John”

I never said I loved you, John:
   Why will you teaze me day by day,
And wax a weariness to think upon
      With always “do” and “pray”?

You know I never loved you, John;
   No fault of mine made me your toast:
Why will you haunt me with a face as wan
      As shows an hour-old ghost?

I dare say Meg or Moll would take
   Pity upon you, if you’d ask:
And pray don’t remain single for my sake
      Who can’t perform that task.

I have no heart?—Perhaps I have not;
   But then you’re mad to take offence
That I don’t give you what I have not got:
      Use your own common sense.

Let bygones be bygones:
   Don’t call me false, who owed not to be true:
I’d rather answer “No” to fifty Johns
      Than answer “Yes” to you.

Let’s mar our pleasant days no more,
   Song-birds of passage, days of youth:
Catch at today, forget the days before:
      I’ll wink° at your untruth.

Let us strike hands as hearty friends;
   No more, no less; and friendship’s good:

Only don’t keep in view ulterior ends,
And points not understood

In open treaty. Rise above
Quibbles and shuffling off and on:
Here’s friendship for you if you like; but love,—
No, thank you, John.

1860 1862

Notes

- °: *close (both) eyes* Return to reference °

Promises Like Pie-Crust

Promise me no promises,
So will I not promise you:
Keep we both our liberties,
Never false and never true:
Let us hold the die uncast,
Free to come as free to go:
For I cannot know your past,
And of mine what can you know?

You, so warm, may once have been
Warmer towards another one:
I, so cold, may once have seen
Sunlight, once have felt the sun:
Who shall show us if it was
Thus indeed in time of old?
Fades the image from the glass,
And the fortune is not told.

If you promised, you might grieve
For lost liberty again:
If I promised, I believe
I should fret to break the chain.
Let us be the friends we were,
Nothing more but nothing less:
Many thrive on frugal fare
Who would perish of excess.

1861 1896

In Progress

Ten years ago it seemed impossible
  That she should ever grow so calm as this,
  With self-remembrance in her warmest kiss
And dim dried eyes like an exhausted well.
Slow-speaking when she has some fact to tell,
  Silent with long-unbroken silences,
  Centred in self yet not unpleased to please,
Gravely monotonous like a passing bell.[1]
Mindful of drudging daily common things,
  Patient at pastime, patient at her work,
    Wearied perhaps but strenuous certainly.
    Sometimes I fancy we may one day see
  Her head shoot forth seven stars from where they lurk
And her eyes lightnings and her shoulders wings.

1862 1896

Endnotes

- Note 1: Bell rung during or after a person's death, a death bell.Return to reference 1

A Life’s Parallels

Never on this side of the grave again,
On this side of the river,
On this side of the garner° of the grain,
Never,—

Ever while time flows on and on and on,
That narrow noiseless river,
Ever while corn bows heavy-headed, wan,
Ever,—

Never despairing, often fainting, rueing,
But looking back, ah never!
Faint yet pursuing, faint yet still pursuing
Ever.

1881

Notes

- °: *storehouse*Return to reference °

WILLIAM MORRIS
1834–1896

William Morris's career was more multifaceted than that of any other Victorian writer in this anthology. He was a poet, a writer of prose romances, a painter, a designer of furniture, a businessman, a printer, and a leader of the British socialist movement.

Born of wealthy parents and brought up in the Essex countryside, he went to Oxford with the intention of becoming a clergyman. However, art for him soon displaced religion. At Oxford he discovered the work of John Ruskin, which was, in his words, "a revelation." Later in life he wrote, "It was through him that I learned to give form to my discontent. . . . Apart from the desire to produce beautiful things, the leading passion of my life has been and is hatred of modern civilization." Morris's career in many ways realized Ruskin's views. In 1861 Morris and several friends founded a company to design and produce furniture, wallpaper, textiles, stained glass, tapestries, and carpets, objects still prized today as masterpieces of decorative art. Morris's aim was not only to make beautiful things but to restore creativity to modern manufacture, much as Ruskin had urged in "The Nature of Gothic," a chapter in *The Stones of Venice* (1851–53). The minor arts, he believed, were in a state of complete degradation; through his firm he wanted to restore beauty of design and individual craftsmanship.

In his design work Morris developed close ties with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood; its cofounder Dante Gabriel Rossetti

became a particular friend. In 1858 Morris published a remarkable book of poetry, *The Defence of Guenevere, and Other Poems*, which some critics regard as the finest book of Pre-Raphaelite verse. Using medieval materials, the poems plunge the reader into the middle of dramatic situations with little sense of larger narrative context or even right and wrong, where little is clear but the vividness of the characters' perceptions. After *The Defence of Guenevere*, Morris turned from lyric to narrative, publishing *The Life and Death of Jason* (1867) and *The Earthly Paradise* (1868–70), a series of twenty-four classical and medieval tales. He then discovered the Icelandic sagas. He co-translated the *Volsunga Saga* and wrote a poem based on it, *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung* (1876). In 1877 he founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

In the late 1870s, after Morris came to the conclusion that art could not have real life and growth under the commercialism of modern society, he turned to socialism. In 1883 he joined the Socialist Democratic Federation; the next year he led the secession of a large faction to found the Socialist League. He was at the center of socialist activity in England through the rest of the decade. At the famous debates held on Sunday evenings at Morris's house, political and literary figures regularly gathered, including William Butler Yeats and George Bernard Shaw. Morris lectured and wrote tirelessly for the cause, producing essays, columns, and a series of socialist literary works, among them *A Dream of John Ball* (1887) and *News from Nowhere* (1890), a utopian vision of life under communism in twenty-first-century England.

In 1890 Morris's health failed and factionalism brought his leadership of the Socialist League to an end. In 1891 he cofounded the Kelmscott Press, the first fine art press in England, whose masterpiece was the Kelmscott Chaucer, an edition of *The Canterbury Tales* (1387) with illustrations by the Pre-Raphaelite painter Edward Burne Jones and designs by Morris himself.

In the obituary he published after Morris's death, Shaw wrote, "He was ultramodern—not merely up-to-date, but far ahead of it: his wall papers, his hangings, his tapestries, and his printed books have

the twentieth century in every touch of them." Not only did Morris develop design principles that remained important in the twentieth century, but he also had a radical vision of the relationship of aesthetics to politics. He was, as Shaw said, "a complete artist."

The Defence of Guenevere For this poem Morris created strikingly original adaptations of episodes from one of his favorite books, Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur* (1470). In Malory's narrative, Arthur's kingdom is eventually destroyed by dissension among his followers; especially damaging to the king's reign are rumors of an adulterous relationship between Queen Guenevere and Arthur's chief knight, Launcelot. Morris's poem alludes to two occasions in Malory's work when Guenevere is discovered in apparently compromising circumstances that lead to public accusations of adultery. On the first occasion (described in lines 167–220), her accuser, Sir Mellyagraunce, is challenged by Launcelot to a trial of battle. After Mellyagraunce is slain, the queen's honor is temporarily restored, though in Morris's telling this earlier scandal is revived by Sir Gauwaine in his accusations against her. The second occasion, which occurs just before Morris's poem opens, is more seriously incriminating. Thirteen knights plot successfully to trap Launcelot when he is visiting the queen's chamber at night at her invitation (events described in lines 242–76). In his escape Launcelot kills all but one of the knights—an event that later leads to civil war. In Malory's version there is no formal trial of the queen after Launcelot's escape; she is simply told of her sentence—she will be burned at the stake—and is thereafter rescued by Launcelot, who takes her away to safety in his castle. In inventing his trial scene Morris probably drew from a different episode in Malory (book 18, chapter 3), which ends with Sir Gauwaine accusing Guenevere of murder and treason in the presence of many other knights.

According to Morris's daughter, this poem originally opened with a long introductory passage of description and background. Because Morris subsequently decided to omit it, we are plunged at once into a dramatic scene much like those that begin some of the poems of Robert Browning (the Victorian poet whom Morris most admired). Also reminiscent of Browning's work are the constant shifts in Guenevere's speech from an awareness of her present situation to the recollection of moments in her past, such as the spring day early in her marriage to Arthur when Launcelot first kissed her.

Despite his copious production of visual artifacts, *Queen Guenevere* (1858) is the only full-size oil painting Morris ever finished. His model for Guenevere, who stands pensively in front of a rumpled bed, was Jane Burden, who became his wife the following year.

The Defence of Guenevere

But, knowing now that they would have her speak,
She threw her wet hair backward from her brow,
Her hand close to her mouth touching her cheek,

As though she had had there a shameful blow,
And feeling it shameful to feel aught° but shame
All through her heart, yet felt her cheek burned so,

She must a little touch it; like one lame
She walked away from Gauwaine, with her head
Still lifted up; and on her cheek of flame

The tears dried quick; she stopped at last and said:
"O knights and lords, it seems but little skill°
To talk of well-known things past now and dead.

"God wot° I ought to say, I have done ill,
And pray you all forgiveness heartily!
Because you must be right, such great lords—still

"Listen, suppose your time were come to die,
And you were quite alone and very weak;
Yea, laid a dying while very mightily

"The wind was ruffling up the narrow streak
Of river through your broad lands running well:
Suppose a hush should come, then someone speak:

" 'One of these cloths is heaven, and one is hell,
Now choose one cloth forever, which they be,
I will not tell you, you must somehow tell

" 'Of your own strength and mightiness; here, see!'
Yea, yea, my lord, and you to ope your eyes,
At foot of your familiar bed to see

"A great God's angel standing, with such dyes,
Not known on earth, on his great wings, and hands,
Held out two ways, light from the inner skies

"Showing him well, and making his commands
Seem to be God's commands, moreover, too,
Holding within his hands the cloths on wands;

"And one of these strange choosing cloths was blue,
Wavy and long, and one cut short and red;
No man could tell the better of the two.

"After a shivering half hour you said,
'God help! heaven's color, the blue'; and he said,
'hell.'
Perhaps you then would roll upon your bed,

"And cry to all good men that loved you well,
'Ah Christ! if only I had known, known, known';
Launcelot went away, then I could tell,

"Like wisest man how all things would be, moan,
And roll and hurt myself, and long to die,
And yet fear much to die for what was sown.

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever may have happened through these years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie."

Her voice was low at first, being full of tears,
But as it cleared, it grew full loud and shrill,
Growing a windy shriek in all men's ears,

A ringing in their startled brains, until
She said that Gauwaine lied, then her voice sunk,
And her great eyes began again to fill,

Though still she stood right up, and never shrunk,
But spoke on bravely, glorious lady fair!
Whatever tears her full lips may have drunk,

She stood, and seemed to think, and wrung her hair,
Spoke out at last with no more trace of shame,
With passionate twisting of her body there:

"It chanced upon a day that Launcelot came
To dwell at Arthur's court: at Christmas time
This happened; when the heralds sung his name,

" 'Son of King Ban[1] of Benwick,' seemed to chime
Along with all the bells that rang that day,
O'er the white roofs, with little change of rhyme.

"Christmas and whitened winter passed away,
And over me the April sunshine came,
Made very awful with black hail-clouds, yea.

"And in Summer I grew white with flame,
And bowed my head down—Autumn, and the sick
Sure knowledge things would never be the same,

"However often Spring might be most thick
Of blossoms and buds, smote on me, and I grew
Careless of most things, let the clock tick, tick,

"To my unhappy pulse, that beat right through
My eager body; while I laughed out loud,
And let my lips curl up at false or true,

"Seemed cold and shallow without any cloud.
Behold my judges, then the cloths were brought:
While I was dizzied thus, old thoughts would crowd,

"Belonging to the time ere I was bought
By Arthur's great name and his little love,
Must I give up forever then, I thought,

"That which I deemed would ever round me move
Glorifying all things; for a little word,[2]
Scarce ever meant at all, must I now prove

"Stone-cold for ever? Pray you, does the Lord
Will that all folks should be quite happy and good?
I love God now a little, if this cord[3]

"Were broken, once for all what striving could
Make me love anything in earth or heaven.
So day by day it grew, as if one should

"Slip slowly down some path worn smooth and even,
Down to a cool sea on a summer day;
Yet still in slipping there was some small leaven

"Of stretched hands catching small stones by the way,
Until one surely reached the sea at last,
And felt strange new joy as the worn head lay

"Back, with the hair like seaweed; yea all past
Sweat of the forehead, dryness of the lips,
Washed utterly out by the dear waves o'ercast,

"In the lone sea, far off from any ships!
Do I not know now of a day in Spring?
No minute of that wild day ever slips

"From out my memory; I hear thrushes sing,
And wheresoever I may be, straightway
Thoughts of it all come up with most fresh sting:

"I was half mad with beauty on that day,
And went without my ladies all alone,
In a quiet garden walled round every way;

"I was right joyful of that wall of stone,
That shut the flowers and trees up with the sky,
And trebled all the beauty: to the bone,

"Yea right through to my heart, grown very shy
With weary thoughts, it pierced, and made me glad;
Exceedingly glad, and I knew verily,

"A little thing just then had° made me mad;
I dared not think, as I was wont to do,
Sometimes, upon my beauty; if I had

"Held out my long hand up against the blue,
And, looking on the tenderly darkened fingers,
Thought that by rights one ought to see quite through,

"There, see you, where the soft still light yet lingers,
Round by the edges; what should I have done,
If this had joined with yellow spotted singers,

"And startling green drawn upward by the sun?
But shouting, loosed out, see now! all my hair,
And trancedly stood watching the west wind run

"With faintest half-heard breathing sound—why there
I lose my head e'en now in doing this;

But shortly listen—In that garden fair

"Came Launcelot walking; this is true, the kiss
Wherewith we kissed in meeting that spring day,
I scarce dare talk of the remembered bliss,

"When both our mouths went wandering in one way,
And aching sorely, met among the leaves;
Our hands being left behind strained far away.

"Never within a yard of my bright sleeves
Had Launcelot come before—and now, so nigh!
After that day why is it Guenevere grieves?

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever happened on through all those years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie.

"Being such a lady could I weep these tears
If this were true? A great queen such as I
Having sinned this way, straight her conscience sears;

"And afterwards she liveth hatefully,
Slaying and poisoning, certes° never weeps—
Gauwaine, be friends now, speak me lovingly.

"Do I not see how God's dear pity creeps
All through your frame, and trembles in your mouth?
Remember in what grave your mother sleeps,

"Buried in some place far down in the south,
Men are forgetting as I speak to you;
By her head severed in that awful drouth

"Of pity that drew Agravaine's fell° blow,[4]
I pray your pity! let me not scream out

Forever after, when the shrill winds blow

"Through half your castle-locks! let me not shout
Forever after in the winter night
When you ride out alone! in battle rout

"Let not my rusting tears make your sword light![°]
Ah! God of mercy how he turns away!
So, ever must I dress me to the fight,

"So—let God's justice work! Gauwaine, I say,
See me hew down your proofs: yea all men know
Even as you said how Mellyagraunce one day,

"One bitter day in *la Fausse Garde,*[5] for so
All good knights held it after, saw—
Yea, sirs, by cursed unknightly outrage; though

"You, Gauwaine, held his word without a flaw,
This Mellyagraunce saw blood upon my bed[6]—
Whose blood then pray you? is there any law

"To make a queen say why some spots of red
Lie on her coverlet? or will you say,
'Your hands are white, lady, as when you wed,

" 'Where did you bleed?' and must I stammer out
—'Nay,
I blush indeed, fair lord, only to rend
My sleeve up to my shoulder, where there lay

" 'A knife-point last night': so must I defend
The honor of the lady Guenevere?
Not so, fair lords, even if the world should end

"This very day, and you were judges here
Instead of God. Did you see Mellyagraunce

When Launcelot stood by him? what white fear

"Curdled his blood, and how his teeth did dance,
His side sink in? as my knight cried and said,
'Slayer of unarmed men, here is a chance!

" 'Setter of traps,[7] I pray you guard your head,
By God I am so glad to fight with you,
Stripper of ladies,[8] that my hand feels lead

" 'For driving weight; hurrah now! draw and do,
For all my wounds are moving in my breast,
And I am getting mad with waiting so.'

"He struck his hands together o'er the beast,
Who fell down flat, and groveled at his feet,
And groaned at being slain so young—'at least.'

"My knight said, 'Rise you, sir, who are so fleet
At catching ladies, half-armed will I fight,
My left side all uncovered!' then I weet,°

"Up sprang Sir Mellyagraunce with great delight
Upon his knave's face; not until just then
Did I quite hate him, as I saw my knight

"Along the lists look to my stake and pen°
With such a joyous smile, it made me sigh
From agony beneath my waist-chain,[9] when

"The fight began, and to me they drew nigh;
Ever Sir Launcelot kept him on the right,
And traversed warily, and ever high

"And fast leaped caitiff's° sword, until my knight
Sudden threw up his sword to his left hand,
Caught it, and swung it; that was all the fight.

"Except a spout of blood on the hot land;
For it was hottest summer; and I know
I wondered how the fire, while I should stand,

"And burn, against the heat, would quiver so,
Yards above my head; thus these matters went:
Which things were only warnings of the woe

"That fell on me. Yet Mellyagraunce was shent,°
For Mellyagraunce had fought against the Lord;
Therefore, my lords, take heed lest you be blent°

"With all this wickedness; say no rash word
Against me, being so beautiful; my eyes,
Wept all away to gray, may bring some sword

"To drown you in your blood; see my breast rise,
Like waves of purple sea, as here I stand;
And how my arms are moved in wonderful wise,

"Yea also at my full heart's strong command,
See through my long throat how the words go up
In ripples to my mouth; how in my hand

"The shadow lies like wine within a cup
Of marvelously colored gold; yea now
This little wind is rising, look you up,

"And wonder how the light is falling so
Within my moving tresses: will you dare,
When you have looked a little on my brow,

"To say this thing is vile? or will you care
For any plausible lies of cunning woof,[1]
When you can see my face with no lie there

"Forever? am I not a gracious proof—
'But in your chamber Launcelot was found'—
Is there a good knight then would stand aloof,

"When a queen says with gentle queenly sound:
'O true as steel come now and talk with me,
I love to see your step upon the ground

" 'Unwavering, also well I love to see
That gracious smile light up your face, and hear
Your wonderful words, that all mean verily

" 'The thing they seem to mean: good friend, so dear
To me in everything, come here tonight,
Or else the hours will pass most dull and drear;

" 'If you come not, I fear this time I might
Get thinking over much of times gone by,
When I was young, and green hope was in sight:

" 'For no man cares now to know why I sigh;
And no man comes to sing me pleasant songs,
Nor any brings me the sweet flowers that lie

" 'So thick in the gardens; therefore one so longs
To see you, Launcelot; that we may be
Like children once again, free from all wrongs

" 'Just for one night.' Did he not come to me?
What thing could keep true Launcelot away
If I said 'Come?' there was one less than three

"In my quiet room that night, and we were gay;
Till sudden I rose up, weak, pale, and sick,
Because a bawling broke our dream up, yea

"I looked at Launcelot's face and could not speak,
For he looked helpless too, for a little while;
Then I remember how I tried to shriek,

"And could not, but fell down; from tile to tile
The stones they threw up rattled o'er my head
And made me dizzier; till within a while

"My maids were all about me, and my head
On Launcelot's breast was being soothed away
From its white chattering, until Launcelot said—

"By God! I will not tell you more today,
Judge any way you will—what matters it?
You know quite well the story of that fray,

"How Launcelot stilled their bawling, the mad fit
That caught up Gauwaine—all, all, verily,
But just that which would save me; these things flit.

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever may have happened these long years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie!

"All I have said is truth, by Christ's dear tears."
She would not speak another word, but stood.
Turned sideways; listening, like a man who hears

His brother's trumpet sounding through the wood
Of his foes' lances. She leaned eagerly,
And gave a slight spring sometimes, as she could

At last hear something really; joyfully
Her cheek grew crimson, as the headlong speed
Of the roan charger° drew all men to see,
The knight who came was Launcelot at good need.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Launcelot’s father, a king of Brittany.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Her marriage vow.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Her bond with Launcelot.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In Morris’s version Gauwaine’s brother, Agravaine, beheads their mother, Morgan Le Fay, after she is accused of adultery. In Malory’s narrative another brother, Gaheris, kills her (book 10, chap. 24).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The False Castle (French); a term expressing her contempt. Launcelot’s castle is named the Joyous Garde.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In an earlier episode in Malory’s narrative, Guenevere and some of her young knights who have been wounded in a skirmish are confined for a night in a room in Mellyagraunce’s castle. Discovering bloodstains on her bedclothes the following morning, Mellyagraunce accuses her of adulterous relations with one of the wounded knights. Actually her visiting bedfellow had been Launcelot, who had cut his hand on the window bars as he climbed into her room.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Mellyagraunce tried to prevent Launcelot from coming to defend the queen’s honor by making him fall through a trapdoor into a dungeon.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Mellyagraunce discovers the bloodstains on Guenevere’s bedclothes by pulling open her bed-curtains; he had intended to rape the queen.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: She is chained to a stake, at which she will be burned if Launcelot fails to overcome her accuser.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The threads woven across the threads stretched lengthwise on a loom (the warp). Guenevere imagines these lies as being woven on a loom.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *anything*Return to reference °
- °: *use*Return to reference °
- °: *knows*Return to reference °
- °: *would have*Return to reference °
- °: *certainly*Return to reference °
- °: *cruel*Return to reference °
- °: *weak*Return to reference °
- °: *know*Return to reference °
- °: *prison*Return to reference °
- °: *coward's*Return to reference °
- °: *destroyed*Return to reference °
- °: *blinded*Return to reference °
- °: *battle horse*Return to reference °

How I Became a Socialist[1]

I am asked by the Editor to give some sort of a history of the above conversion, and I feel that it may be of some use to do so, if my readers will look upon me as a type of a certain group of people, but not so easy to do clearly, briefly and truly. Let me, however, try. But first, I will say what I mean by being a Socialist, since I am told that the word no longer expresses definitely and with certainty what it did ten years ago. Well, what I mean by Socialism is a condition of society in which there should be neither rich nor poor, neither master nor master's man, neither idle nor overworked, neither brain-sick brain workers, nor heart-sick hand workers, in a word, in which all men would be living in equality of condition, and would manage their affairs unwastefully, and with the full consciousness that harm to one would mean harm to all—the realization at last of the meaning of the word COMMONWEALTH.

Now this view of Socialism which I hold to-day, and hope to die holding, is what I began with; I had no transitional period, unless you may call such a brief period of political radicalism during which I saw my ideal clear enough, but had no hope of any realization of it. That came to an end some months before I joined the (then) Democratic Federation,[2] and the meaning of my joining that body was that I had conceived a hope of the realization of my ideal. If you ask me how much of a hope, or what I thought we Socialists then living and working would accomplish towards it, or when there would be effected any change in the face of society, I must say, I do not know. I can only say that I did not measure my hope, nor the joy that it brought me at the time. For the rest, when I took that step I was blankly ignorant of economics; I had never so much as opened Adam Smith, or heard of Ricardo, or of Karl Marx.[3] Oddly enough, I *had* read some of Mill,[4] to wit, those posthumous papers of his (published, was it in the *Westminster Review* or the

Fortnightly?) in which he attacks Socialism in its Fourierist[5] guise. In those papers he put the arguments, as far as they go, clearly and honestly, and the result, so far as I was concerned, was to convince me that Socialism was a necessary change, and that it was possible to bring it about in our own days. Those papers put the finishing touch to my conversion to Socialism. Well, having joined a Socialist body (for the Federation soon became definitely Socialist), I put some conscience into trying to learn the economical side of Socialism, and even tackled Marx, though I must confess that, whereas I thoroughly enjoyed the historical part of "Capital," I suffered agonies of confusion of the brain over reading the pure economics of that great work. Anyhow, I read what I could, and will hope that some information stuck to me from my reading; but more, I must think, from continuous conversation with such friends as Bax and Hyndman and Scheu,[6] and the brisk course of propaganda meetings which were going on at the time, and in which I took my share. Such finish to what of education in practical Socialism as I am capable of I received afterwards from some of my Anarchist friends, from whom I learned, quite against their intention, that Anarchism was impossible, much as I learned from Mill against *his* intention that Socialism was necessary.

But in this telling how I fell into *practical* Socialism I have begun, as I perceive, in the middle, for in my position of a well-to-do man, not suffering from the disabilities which oppress a working-man at every step, I feel that I might never have been drawn into the practical side of the question if an ideal had not forced me to seek towards it. For politics as politics, *i.e.*, not regarded as a necessary if cumbersome and disgustful means to an end, would never have attracted me, nor when I had become conscious of the wrongs of society as it now is, and the oppression of poor people, could I have ever believed in the possibility of a *partial* setting right of those wrongs. In other words, I could never have been such a fool as to believe in the happy and "respectable" poor.

If, therefore, my ideal forced me to look for practical Socialism, what was it that forced me to conceive of an ideal? Now, here comes

in what I said (in this paper) of my being a type of a certain group of mind.

Before the uprising of *modern* Socialism almost all intelligent people either were, or professed themselves to be, quite contented with the civilization of this century. Again, almost all of these really were thus contented, and saw nothing to do but to perfect the said civilization by getting rid of a few ridiculous survivals of the barbarous ages. To be short, this was the *Whig*[7] frame of mind, natural to the modern prosperous middle-class men, who, in fact, as far as mechanical progress is concerned, have nothing to ask for, if only Socialism would leave them alone to enjoy their plentiful style.

But besides these contented ones there were others who were not really contented, but had a vague sentiment of repulsion to the triumph of civilization, but were coerced into silence by the measureless power of Whiggery. Lastly, there were a few who were in open rebellion against the said Whiggery—a few, say two, Carlyle and Ruskin. The latter, before my days of practical Socialism, was my master towards the ideal aforesaid, and, looking backward, I cannot help saying, by the way, how deadly dull the world would have been twenty years ago but for Ruskin! It was through him that I learned to give form to my discontent, which I must say was not by any means vague. Apart from the desire to produce beautiful things, the leading passion of my life has been and is hatred of modern civilization. What shall I say of it now, when the words are put into my mouth, my hope of its destruction—what shall I say of its supplanting by Socialism?

What shall I say concerning its mastery of and its waste of mechanical power, its commonwealth so poor, its enemies of the commonwealth so rich, its stupendous organization—for the misery of life! Its contempt of simple pleasures which everyone could enjoy but for its folly? Its eyeless vulgarity which has destroyed art, the one certain solace of labour? All this I felt then as now, but I did not know why it was so. The hope of the past times was gone, the struggles of mankind for many ages had produced nothing but this sordid, aimless, ugly confusion; the immediate future seemed to me

likely to intensify all the present evils by sweeping away the last survivals of the days before the dull squalor of civilization had settled down on the world. This was a bad lookout indeed, and, if I may mention myself as a personality and not as a mere type, especially so to a man of my disposition, careless of metaphysics and religion, as well as of scientific analysis, but with a deep love of the earth and the life on it, and a passion for the history of the past of mankind. Think of it! Was it all to end in a counting-house on the top of a cinder-heap, with Podsnap's[8] drawing-room in the offing, and a Whig committee dealing out champagne to the rich and margarine to the poor in such convenient proportions as would make all men contented together, though the pleasure of the eyes was gone from the world, and the place of Homer was to be taken by Huxley?[9] Yet, believe me, in my heart, when I really forced myself to look towards the future, that is what I saw in it, and, as far as I could tell, scarce anyone seemed to think it worth while to struggle against such a consummation of civilization. So there I was in for a fine pessimistic end of life, if it had not somehow dawned on me that amidst all this filth of civilization the seeds of a great chance, what we others call Social-Revolution, were beginning to germinate. The whole face of things was changed to me by that discovery, and all I had to do then in order to become a Socialist was to hook myself on to the practical movement, which, as before said, I have tried to do as well as I could.

To sum up, then, the study of history and the love and practice of art forced me into a hatred of the civilization which, if things were to stop as they are, would turn history into inconsequent nonsense, and make art a collection of the curiosities of the past which would have no serious relation to the life of the present.

But the consciousness of revolution stirring amidst our hateful modern society prevented me, luckier than many others of artistic perceptions, from crystallizing into a mere railer against "progress" on the one hand, and on the other from wasting time and energy in any of the numerous schemes by which the quasi-artistic of the

middle classes hope to make art grow when it has no longer any root, and thus I became a practical Socialist.

A last word or two. Perhaps some of our friends will say, what have we to do with these matters of history and art? We want by means of Social-Democracy to win a decent livelihood, we want in some sort to live, and that at once. Surely any one who professes to think that the question of art and cultivation must go before that of the knife and fork (and there are some who do propose that) does not understand what art means, or how that its roots must have a soil of a thriving and unanxious life. Yet it must be remembered that civilization has reduced the workman to such a skinny and pitiful existence, that he scarcely knows how to frame a desire for any life much better than that which he now endures perforce. It is the province of art to set the true ideal of a full and reasonable life before him, a life to which the perception and creation of beauty, the enjoyment of real pleasure that is, shall be felt to be as necessary to man as his daily bread, and that no man, and no set of men, can be deprived of this except by mere opposition, which should be resisted to the utmost.

1894 1894

Endnotes

- Note 1: Written for the socialist magazine *Justice* in 1894.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The first socialist organization in London, founded in 1881.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: German political philosopher (1818–1883), who developed the concept of communism; his *Capital* (1867–94) is an analysis of capitalism. Smith (1723–1790), Scottish economist who argued that natural laws of production and exchange govern economies and produce wealth. Smith's work was an important justification of capitalism and laissez-faire (noninterventionist) economics. David Ricardo (1772–1823), English economist whose labor theory of value influenced Marx.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: James Mill (1773–1836), philosopher, political economist, and historian, and the father of John Stuart Mill.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Characteristic of a political philosophy, developed by Charles Fourier (1772–1837), that advocated a social reorganization to equalize wealth.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Ernest Belfort Bax (1854–1926), H. M. Hyndman (1842–1921), and Andreas Scheu (1844–1927), leaders in the early English socialist movement.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: From the monarchical crisis of 1678–81 onward, the term *Whig* (from *whiggamore*, a Scottish name for a cattle driver) designated a member of one of the two major parliamentary alliances (the Tories being the opposing group). Originally an aristocratic faction interested in reducing the power of the Crown, the Whigs became progressively associated with reform, and thus formed important bonds with other groups and individuals, such as moneyed industrialists, champions of free trade, and religious dissenters. This Whig-Radical coalition was known colloquially as the Liberal Party from 1839 onward; it adopted the name officially when it assumed the form of a modern political party in the 1860s. The term *Whig* remained in informal use, often in connection with a self-congratulatory state of mind most famously promulgated by Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859). His writings presented all English history as leading up to the parliamentary Reform Bill of 1832, and celebrated contemporary English life as the pinnacle of human achievement and civilization.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Podsnap is a character in Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* (1865) who represents the epitome of pretentious middle-class respectability. "Counting-house": accountant's office.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: T. H. Huxley (1825–1895), writer on science, education, and philosophy.Return to reference 9

AUGUSTA WEBSTER
1837–1894

Even relatively reclusive writers tend to leave behind letters or journals; this is not the case with Augusta Webster. We do not even have much in the way of anecdotes from friends or acquaintances. We know she was born in 1837, in Poole, Dorset, to Julia Hume Davies and Vice-Admiral George Davies, and that she spent at least some of her childhood living on her father's ship, the *Griper*. In 1851, her father was appointed chief constable of Cambridgeshire where she came to be known as "one of the brilliant daughters of Admiral Davies"—though we do not know for certain how many sisters she may have had. She must have had a brother, since the writer Vernon Lee claims she learned Greek in order to help him. She also learned Italian, Spanish, and French. And we know that she was admitted to the South Kensington Art School, although according to the British feminist and politician Ray Strachey, she "nearly dashed the prospects of women art students for ever by being expelled for whistling."

Augusta Davies married Trinity fellow and law lecturer Thomas Webster in 1863; the couple had one child, a daughter. Sometime around 1870, the family moved to London so as to allow Augusta to pursue her literary career and her political activism: she was elected head of the Chelsea division of the London school board twice and was active in the movement for women's education.

In terms of her writing, Webster was the author of several powerful volumes of poetry, including *Dramatic Studies* (1866), *A Woman Sold* (1867), and *Portraits* (1870), along with a novel, several plays, and translations from the Greek. She also worked as poetry reviewer for *The Athenaeum* and wrote articles for *The Examiner*. Her poetry was popular during her lifetime: *Portraits*, for example, went to three editions. She suffered the fate of many women poets, however, in being regarded as a "woman poet," rather than being assessed simply as a "poet." This is a fate she attempted to avoid by using the pseudonym "Cecil Home" for her first few publications. After 1864, she published under her own name.

Some have called Webster's characteristic form "dramatic monologue," but her work differs significantly from that of the most important practitioner in that mode, Robert Browning. While his speakers often have an obvious interlocutor, hers rarely do; as a result, they can seem like ruminations rather than confessions or speeches. In addition, while his work tends to focus on interior states and purely psychological issues (greed, jealousy, possessiveness, sensuousness, love), she tends to address interior states as they relate to social conditions. While Webster's poetry is political, however, it is also important aesthetically: as critic Herbert Tucker points out, she is "an exquisite innovator in the resources of blank verse."

Webster died in 1894, by which point whatever respect that had been accorded to her poetry had already begun to fade. Only in the 1980s and 1990s did feminist scholars begin to call attention to the power and interest of her work.

Circe[1]

The sun drops luridly into the west;
darkness has raised her arms to draw him down
before the time, not waiting as of wont
till he has come to her behind the sea;
and the smooth waves grow sullen in the gloom
and wear their threatening purple; more and more
the plain of waters sways and seems to rise
convexly from its level of the shores;
and low dull thunder rolls along the beach:
there will be storm at last, storm, glorious storm.

Oh welcome, welcome, though it rend my bowers,
scattering my blossomed roses like the dust,
splitting the shrieking branches, tossing down
my riotous vines with their young half-tinged grapes
like small round amethysts or beryls strung
tumultuously in clusters, though it sate°
its ravenous spite among my goodliest pines
standing there round and still against the sky
that makes blue lakes between their sombre tufts,
or harry from my silvery olive slopes
some hoary king whose gnarled fantastic limbs
wear crooked armour of a thousand years;
though it will hurl high on my flowery shores
the hostile wave that rives at the poor sward[2]
and drags it down the slants,° that swirls its foam
over my terraces, shakes their firm blocks
of great bright marbles into tumbled heaps,
and makes my pleached and mossy labyrinths,
where the small odorous blossoms grow like stars
strewn in the milky way, a briny marsh.

What matter? let it come and bring me change,
breaking the sickly sweet monotony.

I am too weary of this long bright calm;
always the same blue sky, always the sea
the same blue perfect likeness of the sky,
one rose to match the other that has waned,
to-morrow's dawn the twin of yesterday's;
and every night the ceaseless crickets chirp
the same long joy and the late strain of birds
repeats their strain of all the even month;
and changelessly the petty plashing surfs
bubble their chiming burden round the stones;
dusk after dusk brings the same languid trance
upon the shadowy hills, and in the fields
the waves of fireflies come and go the same,
making the very flash of light and stir
vex one like dronings of the spinning wheel.

Give me some change. Must life be only sweet,
all honey-pap[3] as babes would have their food?
And, if my heart must always be adrowse
in a hush of stagnant sunshine, give me then
something outside me stirring; let the storm
break up the sluggish beauty, let it fall
beaten below the feet of passionate winds,
and then to-morrow waken jubilant
in a new birth: let me see subtle joy
of anguish and of hopes, of change and growth.

What fate is mine who, far apart from pains
and fears and turmoils of the cross-grained world,
dwell, like a lonely god, in a charmed isle
where I am first and only, and, like one
who should love poisonous savours more than mead,
long for a tempest on me and grow sick

of resting, and divine free carelessness!
Oh me, I am a woman, not a god;
yea, those who tend me even are more than I,
my nymphs who have the souls of flowers and birds
singing and blossoming immortally.

Ah me! these love a day and laugh again,
and loving, laughing, find a full content;
but I know nought of peace, and have not loved.

Where is my love? Does some one cry for me,
not knowing whom he calls? does his soul cry
for mine to grow beside it, grow in it?
does he beseech the gods to give him me,
the one unknown rare woman by whose side
no other woman, thrice as beautiful,
should once seem fair to him; to whose voice heard
in any common tones no sweetest sound
of love made melody on silver lutes,
or singing like Apollo's[4] when the gods
grow pale with happy listening, might be peered
for making music to him; whom once found
there will be no more seeking anything?

Oh love, oh love, oh love, art not yet come
out of the waiting shadows into life?
art not yet come after so many years
that I have longed for thee? Come! I am here.

Not yet. For surely I should feel a sound
of his far answering, if now in the world
he sought me who will seek me—Oh ye gods
will he not seek me? Is it all a dream?
will there be never never such a man?
will there be only these, these bestial things
who wallow in my styes, or mop and mow

among the trees, or munch in pens and byres,[5]
or snarl and filch° behind their wattled[6] coops;
these things who had believed that they were men?

Nay but he *will* come. Why am I so fair,
and marvellously minded, and with sight
which flashes suddenly on hidden things,
as the gods see who do not need to look?
why wear I in my eyes that stronger power
than basilisks,[7] whose gaze can only kill,
to draw men's souls to me to live or die
as I would have them? why am I given pride
which yet longs to be broken, and this scorn
cruel and vengeful for the lesser men
who meet the smiles I waste for lack of him
and grow too glad? why am I who I am,
but for the sake of him whom fate will send
one day to be my master utterly,
that he should take me, the desire of all,
whom only he in the world could bow to him?

Oh sunlike glory of pale glittering hairs,
bright as the filmy wires my weavers take
to make me golden gauzes; oh deep eyes,
darker and softer than the bluest dusk
of August violets, darker and deep
like crystal fathomless lakes in summer noons;
oh sad sweet longing smile; oh lips that tempt
my very self to kisses; oh round cheeks,
tenderly radiant with the even flush
of pale smoothed coral; perfect lovely face
answering my gaze from out this fleckless pool;
wonder of glossy shoulders, chiselled limbs;
should I be so your lover as I am,
drinking an exquisite joy to watch you thus
in all a hundred changes through the day,

but that I love you for him till he comes,
but that my beauty means his loving it?

Oh, look! a speck on this side of the sun,
coming—yes, coming with the rising wind
that frays the darkening cloud wrack on the verge
and in a little while will leap abroad,
spattering the sky with rushing blacknesses,
dashing the hissing mountainous waves at the stars.
'Twill drive me that black speck a shuddering hulk
caught in the buffeting waves, dashed impotent
from ridge to ridge, will drive it in the night
with that dull jarring crash upon the beach,
and the cries for help and the cries of fear and hope.

And then to-morrow they will thoughtfully,
with grave low voices, count their perils up,
and thank the gods for having let them live,
and tell of wives or mothers in their homes,
and children, who would have such loss in them
that they must weep, and may be I weep too,
with fancy of the weepings had they died.
And the next morrow they will feel their ease
and sigh with sleek content, or laugh elate,
tasting delights of rest and revelling,
music and perfumes, joyaunce for the eyes
of rosy faces and luxurious pomps,
the savour of the banquet and the glow
and fragrance of the wine-cup; and they'll talk
how good it is to house in palaces
out of the storms and struggles, and what luck
strewed their good ship on our accessless coast.
Then the next day the beast in them will wake,
and one will strike and bicker, and one swell
with puffed up greatness, and one gibe and strut
in apish pranks, and one will line his sleeve

with pilfered booties, and one snatch the gems
out of the carven goblets as they pass,
one will grow mad with fever of the wine,
and one will sluggishly besot himself,
and one be lewd, and one be gluttonous;
and I shall sickly look, and loathe them all.

Oh my rare cup! my pure and crystal cup,
with not one speck of colour to make false
the passing lights, or flaw to make them swerve!
My cup of Truth! How the lost fools will laugh
and thank me for my boon, as if I gave
some momentary flash of the gods' joy,
to drink where I have drunk and touch the touch
of my lips with their own! Aye, let them touch.

Too cruel am I? And the silly beasts,
crowding around me when I pass their way,
glower on me and, although they love me still,
(with their poor sorts of love such as they could,)
call wrath and vengeance to their humid eyes
to scare me into mercy, or creep near
with piteous fawnings, supplicating bleats.
Too cruel? Did I choose them what they are?
or change them from themselves by poisonous
charms?
But any draught, pure water, natural wine,
out of my cup, revealed them to themselves
and to each other. Change? there was no change;
only disguise gone from them unawares:
and had there been one right true man of them
he would have drunk the draught as I had drunk,
and stood unchanged, and looked me in the eyes,
abashing me before him. But these things—
why, which of them has even shown the kind
of some one nobler beast? Pah, yapping wolves

and pitiless stealthy wild-cats, curs and apes
and gorging swine and slinking venomous snakes
all false and ravenous and sensual brutes
that shame the Earth that bore them, these they are.

Lo, lo! the shivering blueness darting forth
on half the heavens, and the forked thin fire
strikes to the sea: and hark, the sudden voice
that rushes through the trees before the storm,
and shuddering of the branches. Yet the sky
is blue against them still, and early stars
glimmer above the pine-tops; and the air
clings faint and motionless around me here.

Another burst of flame—and the black speck
shows in the glare, lashed onwards. It were well
I bade make ready for our guests to-night.

1870

Endnotes

- Note 1: A minor Greek goddess and enchantress.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Grassy ground; “rives”: forcibly split.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Sweet, soft food for babies.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Greek and Roman god of archery and patron of herdsmen and shepherds.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A stable for cows.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Made from interwoven twigs or rods.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Mythical reptiles that can cause death with a glance.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *satisfy* Return to reference °
- °: *slopes* Return to reference °
- °: *steal* Return to reference °

A Castaway

Poor little diary, with its simple thoughts,
its good resolves, its "Studied French an hour,"
"Read Modern History," "Trimmed up my grey hat,"
"Darned stockings," "Tatted,"° "Practised my new song,"
"Went to the daily service," "Took Bess soup,"
"Went out to tea." Poor simple diary!
and did *I* write it? Was I this good girl,
this budding colourless young rose of home?
did I so live content in such a life,
seeing no larger scope, nor asking it,
than this small constant round—old clothes to mend,
new clothes to make, then go and say my prayers,
or carry soup, or take a little walk
and pick the ragged-robins° in the hedge?
Then for ambition, (was there ever life
that could forego that?) to improve my mind
and know French better and sing harder songs;
for gaiety, to go, in my best white
well washed and starched and freshened with new bows,
and take tea out to meet the clergyman.
No wishes and no cares, almost no hopes,
only the young girl's hazed and golden dreams
that veil the Future from her.

So long since:
and now it seems a jest to talk of me
as if I could be one with her, of me
who am. . . . . me.

And what is that? My looking-glass
answers it passably; a woman sure,
no fiend, no slimy thing out of the pools,
a woman with a ripe and smiling lip
that has no venom in its touch I think,
with a white brow on which there is no brand;
a woman none dare call not beautiful,
not womanly in every woman's grace.

Aye let me feed upon my beauty thus,
be glad in it like painters when they see
at last the face they dreamed but could not find
look from their canvass on them, triumph in it,
the dearest thing I have. Why, 'tis my all,
let me make much of it: is it not this,
this beauty, my own curse at once and tool
to snare men's souls—(I know what the good say
of beauty in such creatures)—is it not this
that makes me feel myself a woman still,
some little pride some little—

Here's a jest!
what word will fit the sense but modesty?
A wanton I but modest!

Modest, true;
I'm not drunk in the streets, ply not for hire
at infamous corners with my likenesses
of the humbler kind; yes, modesty's my word—
'twould shape my mouth well too, I think I'll try:
"Sir, Mr What-you-will, Lord Who-knows-what,
my present lover or my next to come,
value me at my worth, fill your purse full,
for I am modest; yes, and honour me
as though your schoolgirl sister or your wife

could let her skirts brush mine or talk of me;
for I am modest."

Well, I flout myself:
but yet, but yet——

Fie, poor fantastic fool,
why do I play the hypocrite alone,
who am no hypocrite with others by?
where should be my "But yet"? I am that thing
called half a dozen dainty names, and none
dainty enough to serve the turn and hide
the one coarse English worst that lurks beneath:
just that, no worse, no better.

And, for me,
I say let no one be above her trade;
I own my kindredship with any drab
who sells herself as I, although she crouch
in fetid garrets and I have a home
all velvet and marqueterie and pastilles,[1]
although she hide her skeleton in rags
and I set fashions and wear cobweb lace:
the difference lies but in my choicer ware,
that I sell beauty and she ugliness;
our traffic's one—I'm no sweet slaver-tongue
to gloze[2] upon it and explain myself
a sort of fractious angel misconceived—
our traffic's one: I own it. And what then?
I know of worse that are called honourable.
Our lawyers, who, with noble eloquence
and virtuous outbursts, lie to hang a man,
or lie to save him, which way goes the fee:
our preachers, gloating on your future hell
for not believing what they doubt themselves:
our doctors, who sort poisons out by chance,

and wonder how they'll answer, and grow rich:
our journalists, whose business is to fib
and juggle truths and falsehoods to and fro:
our tradesmen, who must keep unspotted names
and cheat the least like stealing that they can:
our——all of them, the virtuous worthy men
who feed on the world's follies, vices, wants,
and do their businesses of lies and shams
honestly, reputably, while the world
claps hands and cries "good luck," which of their
trades,
their honourable trades, barefaced like mine,
all secrets brazened out, would shew more white?

And whom do I hurt more than they? as much?
The wives? Poor fools, what do I take from them
worth crying for or keeping? If they knew
what their fine husbands look like seen by eyes
that may perceive there are more men than one!
But, if they can, let them just take the pains
to keep them: 'tis not such a mighty task
to pin an idiot to your apron-string;
and wives have an advantage over us,
(the good and blind ones have), the smile or pout
leaves them no secret nausea at odd times.
Oh they could keep their husbands if they cared,
but 'tis an easier life to let them go,
and whimper at it for morality.

Oh! those shrill carping virtues, safely housed
from reach of even a smile that should put red
on a decorous cheek, who rail at us
with such a spiteful scorn and rancourousness,
(which maybe is half envy at the heart),
and boast themselves so measurelessly good
and us so measurelessly unlike them,

what is their wondrous merit that they stay
in comfortable homes whence not a soul
has ever thought of tempting them, and wear
no kisses but a husband's upon lips
there is no other man desires to kiss—
refrain in fact from sin impossible?
How dare they hate us so? what have they done,
what borne, to prove them other than we are?
What right have they to scorn us—glass-case saints,
Dianas[3] under lock and key—what right
more than the well-fed helpless barn-door fowl
to scorn the larcenous wild-birds?

Pshaw, let be!
Scorn or no scorn, what matter for their scorn?
I have outfaced my own—that's harder work.
Oh let their virtuous malice dribble on—
mock snowstorms on the stage—I'm proof long since:
I have looked coolly on my what and why,
and I accept myself.

Oh I'll endorse
the shamefullest revilings mouthed at me,
cry "True! Oh perfect picture! Yes, that's I!"
and add a telling blackness here and there,
and then dare swear you, every nine of ten,
my judges and accusers, I'd not change
my conscience against yours, you who tread out
your devil's pilgrimage along the roads
that take in church and chapel, and arrange
a roundabout and decent way to hell.

Well mine's a short way and a merry one:
so says my pious hash of ohs and ahs,
choice texts and choicer threats, appropriate names,

(Rahabs and Jezebels), some fierce Tartuffe[4]
hurled at me through the post. We had rare fun
over that tract digested with champagne.
Where is it? where's my rich repertory
of insults biblical? '*I prey on souls*'—
only my men have oftenest none I think:
'*I snare the simple ones*'—but in these days
there seem to be none simple and none snared,
and most men have their favourite sinnings planned
to do them civilly and sensibly:
'*I braid my hair*'—but braids are out of date:
'*I paint my cheeks*'—I always wear them pale:
'*I*—'

Pshaw! the trash is savourless to-day:
one cannot laugh alone. There, let it burn.
What, does the windy dullard think one needs
his wisdom dove-tailed on to Solomon's,[5]
his threats out-threatening God's, to teach the news
that those who need not sin have safer souls?
We know it, but we've bodies to save too;
and so we earn our living.

Well lit, tract!
at least you've made me a good leaping blaze.
Up, up, how the flame shoots! and now 'tis dead.
Oh proper finish, preaching to the last—
no such bad omen either; sudden end,
and no sad withering horrible old age.
How one would clutch at youth to hold it tight!
and then to know it gone, to see it gone,
be taught its absence by harsh careless looks,
to live forgotten, solitary, old—
the cruellest word that ever woman learns.
Old—that's to be nothing, or to be at best
a grey memorial that in better days

there was a woman once with such a name.
No, no, I could not bear it: death itself
shows kinder promise. . . . . even death itself,
since it must come one day—

Oh this grey gloom!
This rain, rain, rain, what wretched thoughts it
brings!
Death: I'll not think of it.

Will no one come?
'Tis dreary work alone.

Why did I read
that silly diary? Now, sing song, ding dong,
come the old vexing echoes back again,
church bells and nursery good-books, back again
upon my shrinking ears that had forgotten—
I hate the useless memories: 'tis fools' work
singing the hacknied dirge of 'better days':
best take Now kindly, give the past good-bye,
whether it were a better or a worse.

Yes, yes, I listened to the echoes once,
the echoes and the thoughts from the old days.
The worse for me: I lost my richest friend,
and that was all the difference. For the world
I would not have that flight known. How they'd roar:
"What! Eulalie, when she refused us all,
'ill' and 'away,' was doing Magdalene,
tears, ashes, and her Bible, and then off
to hide her in a Refuge . . . for a week!"[6]

A wild whim that, to fancy I could change
my new self for my old, because I wished!
Since then, when in my languid days there comes

that craving, like homesickness, to go back
to the good days, the dear old stupid days,
to the quiet and the innocence, I know
'tis a sick fancy and try palliatives.

What is it? You go back to the old home,
and 'tis not *your* home, has no place for you,
and, if it had, you could not fit you in it.
And could I fit me to my former self?
If I had had the wit, like some of us,
to sow my wild-oats into three per cents,°
could I not find me shelter in the peace
of some far nook where none of them would come,
nor whisper travel from this scurrilous world,
that gloats and moralizes through its leers,
to blast me with my fashionable shame?
There I might—oh my castle in the clouds!
and where's its rent?—but there, were there a there,
I might again live the grave blameless life
among such simple pleasures, simple cares:
but could they be my pleasures be my cares?
The blameless life, but never the content—
never. How could I henceforth be content
in any life but one that sets the brain
in a hot merry fever with its stir?
What would there be in quiet rustic days,
each like the other, full of time to think,
to keep one bold enough to live at all?
Quiet is hell, I say—as if a woman
could bear to sit alone, quiet all day,
and loathe herself, and sicken on her thoughts.

They tried it at the Refuge, and I failed:
I could not bear it. Dreary hideous room,
coarse pittance, prison rules, one might bear these
and keep one's purpose; but so much alone,

and then made faint and weak and fanciful
by change from pampering to half-famishing—
good God, what thoughts come! Only one week more
and 'twould have ended: but in one day more
I must have killed myself. And I loathe death,
the dreadful foul corruption, with who knows
what future after it.

Well, I came back,
back to my slough.° Who says I had my choice?
Could I stay there to die of some mad death?
and if I rambled out into the world,
sinless but penniless, what else were that
but slower death, slow pining shivering death
by misery and hunger? Choice! what choice
of living well or ill? could I have that?
And who would give it me? I think indeed
if some kind hand, a woman's—I hate men—
had stretched itself to help me to firm ground,
taken a chance and risked my falling back,
I could have gone my way not falling back:
but, let her be all brave, all charitable,
how could she do it? Such a trifling boon,
a little work to live by, 'tis not much,
and I might have found will enough to last:
but where's the work? More sempstresses than shirts;
and defter hands at white work than are mine
drop starved at last: dressmakers, milliners,
too many too they say; and then their trades
need skill, apprenticeship. And who so bold
as hire me for their humblest drudgery?
not even for scullery slut;[7] not even, I think,
for governess, although they'd get me cheap.
And after all it would be something hard,

with the marts for decent women overfull,
if I could elbow in and snatch a chance
and oust some good girl so, who then perforce
must come and snatch her chance among our crowd.

Why, if the worthy men who think all's done
if we'll but come where we can hear them preach,
could bring us all, or any half of us,
into their fold, teach all us wandering sheep,
or only half of us, to stand in rows
and baa them hymns and moral songs, good lack,
what would they do with us? what could they do?
Just think! with were't but half of us on hand
to find work for . . . or husbands. Would they try
to ship us to the colonies for wives?[8]

Well, well, I know the wise ones talk and talk:
"Here's cause, here's cure:" "No, here it is and here:"
and find society to blame, or law,
the Church, the men, the women, too few schools,
too many schools, too much, too little taught:
somewhere or somehow someone is to blame:
but I say all the fault's with God himself
who puts too many women in the world.
We ought to die off reasonably and leave
as many as the men want, none to waste.
Here's cause; the woman's superfluity:[9]
and for the cure, why, if it were the law,
say, every year, in due percentages,
balancing them with men as the times need,
to kill off female infants, 'twould make room;
and some of us would not have lost too much,
losing life ere we know what it *can* mean.

The other day I saw a woman weep

beside her dead child's bed: the little thing
lay smiling, and the mother wailed half mad,
shrieking to God to give it back again.
I could have laughed aloud: the little girl
living had but her mother's life to live;
there she lay smiling, and her mother wept
to know her gone!

My mother would have wept.

Oh mother, mother, did you ever dream,
you good grave simple mother, you pure soul
no evil could come nigh, did you once dream
in all your dying cares for your lone girl
left to fight out her fortune all alone
that there would be *this* danger?—for *your* girl,
taught by you, lapped in a sweet ignorance,
scarcely more wise of what things sin could be
than some young child a summer six months old,
where in the north the summer makes a day,
of what is darkness . . . darkness that will come
to-morrow suddenly. Thank God at least
for this much of my life, that when you died,
that when you kissed me dying, not a thought
of this made sorrow for you, that I too
was pure of even fear.

Oh yes, I thought,
still new in my insipid treadmill life,
(my father so late dead), and hopeful still
there might be something pleasant somewhere in it,
some sudden fairy come, no doubt, to turn
my pumpkin to a chariot, I thought then
that I might plod, and plod, and drum the sounds
of useless facts into unwilling ears,
tease children with dull questions half the day,

then con dull answers in my room at night
ready for next day's questions, mend quill pens
and cut my fingers, add up sums done wrong
and never get them right; teach, teach, and teach—
what I half knew, or not at all—teach, teach
for years, a lifetime—*I!*

And yet, who knows?
it might have been, for I was patient once,
and willing, and meant well; it might have been
had I but still clung on in my first place—
a safe dull place, where mostly there were smiles
but never merry-makings; where all days
jogged on sedately busy, with no haste;
where all seemed measured out, but margins broad:
a dull home but a peaceful, where I felt
my pupils would be dear young sisters soon,
and felt their mother take me to her heart,
motherly to all lonely harmless things.
But I must have a conscience, must blurt out
my great discovery of my ignorance!
And who required it of me? And who gained?
What did it matter for a more or less
the girls learnt in their schoolbooks, to forget
in their first season? We did well together:
they loved me and I them: but I went off
to housemaid's pay, six crossgrained brats to teach,
wrangles and jangles, doubts, disgrace . . . then this;
and they had a perfection found for them,
who has all ladies' learning in her head
abridged and scheduled, speaks five languages,
knows botany and conchology and globes,[1]
draws, paints, plays, sings, embroiders, teaches all
on a patent method never known to fail:
and now they're finished and, I hear, poor things,
are the worst dancers and worst dressers out.

And, where's their profit of those prison years
all gone to make them wise in lesson books?
who wants his wife to know weeds' Latin names?
who ever chose a girl for saying dates?
or asked if she had learned to trace a map?

Well, well, the silly rules this silly world
makes about women! This is one of them.
Why must there be pretence of teaching them
what no one ever cares that they should know,
what, grown out of the schoolroom, they cast off
like the schoolroom pinafore, no better fit
for any use of real grown-up life,
for any use to her who seeks or waits
the husband and the home, for any use,
for any shallowest pretence of use,
to her who has them? Do I not know this,
I like my betters, that a woman's life,
her natural life, her good life, her one life,
is in her husband, God on earth to her,
and what she knows and what she can and is
is only good as it brings good to him?

Oh God, do I not know it? I the thing
of shame and rottenness, the animal
that feed men's lusts and prey on them, I, I,
who should not dare to take the name of wife
on my polluted lips, who in the word
hear but my own reviling, I know that.
I could have lived by that rule, how content:
my pleasure to make him some pleasure, pride
to be as he would have me, duty, care,
to fit all to his taste, rule my small sphere
to his intention; then to lean on him,
be guided, tutored, loved—no not that word,
that *loved* which between men and women means

all selfishness, all putrid talk, all lust,
all vanity, all idiocy—not loved
but cared for. I've been loved myself, I think,
some once or twice since my poor mother died,
but *cared for*, never:—that a word for homes,
kind homes, good homes, where simple children come
and ask their mother is this right or wrong,
because they know she's perfect, cannot err;
their father told them so, and he knows all,
being so wise and good and wonderful,
even enough to scorn even her at times
and tell her everything she does not know.
Ah the sweet nursery logic!

Fool! thrice fool!
do I hanker after that too? Fancy me
infallible nursery saint, live code of law!
me preaching! teaching innocence to be good!—
a mother!

Yet the baby thing that woke
and wailed an hour or two, and then was dead,
was mine, and had he lived. . . . . why then my name
would have been mother. But 'twas well he died:
I could have been no mother, I, lost then
beyond his saving. Had he come before
and lived, come to me in the doubtful days
when shame and boldness had not grown one sense,
for his sake, with the courage come of him,
I might have struggled back.

But how? But how?
His father would not then have let me go:
his time had not yet come to make an end

of my ‘for ever’ with a hireling’s fee
and civil light dismissal. None but him
to claim a bit of bread of if I went,
child or no child: would he have given it me?
He! no; he had not done with me. No help,
no help, no help. Some ways can be trodden back,
but never our way, we who one wild day
have given goodbye to what in our deep hearts
the lowest woman still holds best in life,
good name—good name though given by the world
that mouths and garbles with its decent prate,
and wraps it in respectable grave shams,
and patches conscience partly by the rule
of what one’s neighbour thinks but something more
by what his eyes are sharp enough to see.
How I could scorn it with its Pharisees,[2]
if it could not scorn me: but yet, but yet—
oh God, if I could look it in the face!

Oh I am wild, am ill, I think, to-night:
will no one come and laugh with me? No feast,
no merriment to-night. So long alone!
Will no one come?

At least there’s a new dress
to try, and grumble at—they never fit
to one’s ideal. Yes, a new rich dress,
with lace like this too; that’s a soothing balm
for any fretting woman, cannot fail,
I’ve heard men say it . . . and they know so well
what’s in all women’s hearts, especially
women like me.

No help! no help! no help!
How could it be? It was too late long since—
even at the first too late. Whose blame is that?

there are some kindly people in the world,
but what can they do? If one hurls oneself
into a quicksand, what can be the end,
but that one sinks and sinks? Cry out for help?
Ah yes, and, if it came, who is so strong
to strain from the firm ground and lift one out?
And how, so firmly clutching the stretched hand,
as death's pursuing terror bids, even so,
how can one reach firm land, having to foot
the treacherous crumbling soil that slides and gives
and sucks one in again? Impossible path!
No, why waste struggles, I or any one?
what is must be. What then? I, where I am,
sinking and sinking; let the wise pass by
and keep their wisdom for an apter use,
let me sink merrily as I best may.

Only, I think, my brother—I forgot
he stopped his brotherhood some years ago—
but if he had been just so much less good
as to remember mercy. Did he think
how once I was his sister, prizing him
as sisters do, content to learn for him
the lesson girls with brothers all must learn,
to do without?

I have heard girls lament
that doing so without all things one would,
but I saw never aught to murmur at,
for men must be made ready for their work,
and women all have more or less their chance
of husbands to work for them, keep them safe
like summer roses in soft greenhouse air
that never guess 'tis winter out of doors:
no, I saw never aught to murmur at,
content with stinted fare and shabby clothes

and cloistered silent life to save expense,
teaching myself out of my borrowed books,
while he for some one pastime, (needful true
to keep him of his rank, 'twas not his fault),
spent in a month what might have given me
my teachers for a year.

'Twas no one's fault:
for could he be launched forth on the rude sea
of this contentious world and left to find
oars and the boatman's skill by some good chance?
'Twas no one's fault: yet still he might have thought
of our so different youths, and owned at least
'tis pitiful when a mere nerveless° girl,
untutored, must put forth upon that sea,
not in the woman's true place, the wife's place,
to trust a husband and be borne along,
but impotent blind pilot to herself.

Merciless, merciless—like the prudent world
that will not have the flawed soul prank itself
with a hoped second virtue, will not have
the woman fallen once lift up herself. . . . . .
lest she should fall again. Oh how his taunts,
his loathing fierce reproaches, scarred and seared,
like branding iron hissing in a wound!
And it was true—*that* killed me: and I felt
a hideous hopeless shame kill out my heart,
and knew myself for ever that he said,
that which I was—Oh it was true, true, true.

No, not true then. I was not all that then.
Oh, I have drifted on before mad winds
and made ignoble shipwreck, not to-day
could any breeze of heaven prosper me
into the track again, nor any hand

snatch me out of the whirlpool I have reached;
but then?

Nay he judged very well: he knew
repentance was too dear a luxury
for a beggar's buying, knew it earns no bread—
and knew me a too base and nerveless thing
to bear my first fault's sequel and just die.
And how could he have helped me? Held my hand,
owned me for his, fronted the angry world
clothed with my ignominy? Or maybe
taken me to his home to damn him worse?
What did I look for? for what less would serve
that he could do, a man without a purse?
He meant me well, he sent me that five pounds,
much to him then; and, if he bade me work
and never vex him more with news of me,
we both knew him too poor for pensioners.
I see he did his best; I could wish now
sending it back I had professed some thanks.

But there! I was too wretched to be meek:
it seemed to me as if he, every one,
the whole great world, were guilty of my guilt,
abettors and avengers: in my heart
I gibed them back their gibings; I was wild.

I see clear now and know one has one's life
in hand at first to spend or spare or give
like any other coin; spend it or give
or drop it in the mire, can the world see
you get your value for it, or bar back
the hurrying of its marts to grope it up
and give it back to you for better use?
And if you spend or give that is your choice;
and if you let it slip that's your choice too,

you should have held it firmer. Yours the blame,
and not another's, not the indifferent world's
that goes on steadily, statistically,
and count by censuses not separate souls—
and if it somehow needs to its worst use
so many lives of women, useless else,
it buys us of ourselves, we could hold back,
free all of us to starve, and some of us,
(those who have done no ill and are in luck),
to slave their lives out and have food and clothes
until they grow unserviceably old.

Oh I blame no one—scarcely even myself.
It was to be: the very good in me
has always turned to hurt; all I thought right
at the hot moment, judged of afterwards,
shows reckless.

Why, look at it, had I taken
the pay my dead child's father offered me
for having been its mother, I could then
have kept life in me, (many have to do it,
that swarm in the back alleys, on no more,
cold sometimes, mostly hungry, but they live);
I could have gained a respite trying it,
and maybe found at last some humble work
to eke the pittance out. Not I, forsooth,
I must have spirit, must have womanly pride,
must dash back his contemptuous wages, I,
who had not scorned to earn them, dash them back
the fiercer that he dared to count our boy
in my appraising: and yet now I think
I might have taken it for my dead boy's sake;
it would have been *his* gift.

But I went forth

with my fine scorn, and whither did it lead?
Money's the root of evil do they say?
money is virtue, strength: money to me
would then have been repentance: could I live
upon my idiot's pride?

Well, it fell soon.
I had prayed Edward might believe me dead,
and yet I begged of him—That's like me too,
beg of him and then send him back his alms!
What if he gave as to a whining wretch
that holds her hand and lies? I am less to him
than such a one; her rags do him no wrong,
but I, I, wrong him merely that I live,
being his sister. Could I not at least
have still let him forget me? But 'tis past:
and naturally he may hope I am long dead.

Good God! to think that we were what we were
one to the other . . . and now!

He has done well;
married a sort of heiress, I have heard,
a dapper little madam, dimple cheeked
and dimple brained, who makes him a good wife—
No doubt she'd never own but just to him,
and in a whisper, she can even suspect
that we exist, we other women-things:
what would she say if she could learn one day
she has a sister-in-law! So he and I
must stand apart till doomsday.

But the jest,
to think how she would look!—Her fright, poor thing!
The notion!—I could laugh outright. . . . . or else,
for I feel near it, roll on the ground and sob.

Well, after all, there's not much difference
between the two sometimes.

Was that the bell?
Some one at last, thank goodness. There's a voice,
and that's a pleasure. Whose though? Ah I know.
Why did she come alone, the cackling goose?
why not have brought her sister?—she tells more
and titters less. No matter; half a loaf
is better than no bread.

Oh, is it you?
Most welcome, dear: one gets so moped alone.

1870

Endnotes

- Note 1: A sugar-coated sweet or medicated lozenge; "marqueterie": the craft of using veneer to make decorations.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: To make glosses or explain.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Diana is the Roman goddess of wild animals and the hunt.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Character in the eponymous comedy by Molière (1622–1673); "Rahab": in the Hebrew Bible, Rahab helps the Israelites capture Jericho; "Jezebel": queen who instituted the worship of pagan gods.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The wise king of Israel in the Hebrew Bible.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Magdalene asylums were religious houses for "fallen women"—that is, women who had committed sexual transgressions.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A *scullery* is a room for washing and chores adjacent to a kitchen; a *slut* could be either the person who performs these

chores or a promiscuous woman.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The British government shipped convicts and indentured servants, including women and children, to its colonies around the globe to perform labor and maintain colonial populations.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Mid-19th-century census data revealed a gender imbalance in the population, which suggested that many women would not be able to marry.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Geography, or the study of globes; “conchology”: the study of mollusk shells.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Groups that resisted Hellenization and became the foundation for Rabbinic Judaism.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *knotted lace*Return to reference °
- °: *a type of flower*Return to reference °
- °: *investments*Return to reference °
- °: *deep mud; mire*Return to reference °
- °: *weak; without courage*Return to reference °

Medea in Athens[1]

Dead is he? Yes, our stranger guest said dead—
said it by noonday, when it seemed a thing
most natural and so indifferent
as if the tale ran that a while ago
there died a man I talked with a chance hour
when he by chance was near me. If I spoke
"Good news for us but ill news for the dead
when the gods sweep a villain down to them,"
'twas the prompt trick of words, like a pat phrase
from some one other's song, found on the lips
and used because 'tis there: for through all day
the news seemed neither good nor ill to me.

And now, when day with all its useless talk
and useless smiles and idiots' prying eyes
that impotently peer into one's life,
when day with all its seemly lying shows
has gone its way and left pleased fools to sleep,
while weary mummers,° taking off the mask,
discern that face themselves forgot anon
and, sitting in the lap of sheltering night,
learn their own secrets from her—even now
does it seem either good or ill to me?
No, but mere strange.

And this most strange of all
that I care nothing.

Nay, how wild thought grows.
Meseems one came and told of Jason's death:
but 'twas a dream. Else should I, wondering thus,

reck not of him, nor with the virulent hate
that should be mine against mine enemy,
nor with that weakness which sometimes I feared
should this day make me, not remembering Glaucè,
envy him to death as though he had died mine?

Can he be dead? It were so strange a world
with him not in it.

Dimly I recall
some prophecy a god breathed by my mouth.
It could not err. What was it? For I think
it told his death.

Has a god come to me?
Is it thou, my Hecate? How know I all?
For I know all as if from long ago:
and I know all beholding instantly.
Is not that he, arisen through the mists?—
a lean and haggard man, rough round the eyes,
dull and with no scorn left upon his lip,
decayed out of his goodliness and strength;
a wanned and broken image of a god;
dim counterfeit of Jason, heavily
wearing the name of him and memories.

And lo, he rests with lax and careless limbs
on the loose sandbed wind-heaped round his ship
that rots in sloth like him, and props his head
on a half-buried fallen spar. The sea,
climbing the beach towards him, seethes and frets,
and on the verge two sunned and shadowed clouds
take shapes of notched rock-islands; and his thoughts
drift languid to the steep Symplegades[2]
and the sound of waters crashing at their base.

And now he speaks out to his loneliness
"I was afraid and careful, but she laughed:
'Love steers' she said: and when the rocks were far,
grey twinkling spots in distance, suddenly
her face grew white, and, looking back to them,
she said, 'Oh love, a god has whispered me
'twere well had we died there, for strange mad woes
are waiting for us in your Greece': and then
she tossed her head back, while her brown hair streamed
gold in the wind and sun, and her face glowed
with daring beauty, 'What of woes', she cried,
'if only they leave time for love enough?'
But what a fire and flush! It took one's breath!
And then he lay half musing, half adoze,
shadows of me went misty through his sight.

And bye and bye he roused and cried "Oh dolt!
Glaucè was never half so beautiful."
Then under part-closed lids remembering her,
"Poor Glaucè, a sweet face, and yet methinks
she might have wearied me:" and suddenly,
smiting the sand awhirl with his angry hand,
scorned at himself "What god befooled my wits
to dream my fancy for her yellow curls
and milk-white softness subtle policy?
Wealth and a royal bride: but what beyond?
Medea, with her skills, her presciences,
man's wisdom, woman's craft, her rage of love
that gave her to serve me strength next divine,
Medea would have made me what I would;
Glaucè but what she could. I schemed amiss
and earned the curses the gods send on fools.
Ruined, ruined! A laughing stock to foes!
No man so mean but he may pity me;
no man so wretched but will keep aloof

lest the curse upon me make him wretcheder.
Ruined!”

And lo I see him hide his face
like a man who’ll weep with passion: but to him
the passion comes not, only slow few tears
of one too weary. And from the great field
where the boys race he hears their jubilant shout
hum through the distance, and he sighs “Ah me!
she might have spared the children, left me them:—
no sons, no sons to stand about me now
and prosper me, and tend me bye and bye
in faltering age, and keep my name on earth
when I shall be departed out of sight.”

And the shout hummed louder forth: and whirring past
a screaming sea-bird flapped out to the bay,
and listlessly he watched it dip and rise
till it skimmed out of sight, so small a speck
as a mayfly on the brook; and then he said
“Fly forth, fly forth, bird, fly to fierce Medea
where by great Ægeus[3] she sits queening it,
belike a joyful mother of new sons;
tell her she never loved me as she talked,
else had no wrong at my hand shewn so great:
tell her that she breaks oaths more than I broke,
even so much as she seemed to love most—
she who fits fondling in a husband’s arms
while I am desolate.” And again he said
“My house is perished with me—ruined, ruined!”

At that he rose and, muttering in his teeth
still “ruined, ruined,” slowly paced the sands:
then stood and, gazing on the ragged hulk,

cried "Oh loathed tool of fiends, that, through all storms
and sundering waters, borest me to Medea,
rot, rot, accursed thing," and petulant
pashed at the side—

Lo, lo! I see it part!
a tottering spar—it parts, it falls, it strikes!
He is prone on the sand, the blood wells from his brow,
he moans, he speaks, "Medea's prophecy."
See he has fainted.

Hush, hush! he has lain
with death and silence long: now he wakes up—
"Where is Medea? Let her bind my head."
Hush, hush! A sigh—a breath—He is dead.

******

Medea!
What, is it thou? What, thou, this whimpering fool,
this kind meek coward! Sick for pity art thou?
Or did the vision scare thee? Out on me!
do I drivel like a slight disconsolate girl
wailing her love?

No, not one foolish tear
that shamed my cheek welled up for any grief
at his so pitiful lone end. The touch
of ancient memories and the woman's trick
of easy weeping took me unawares:
but grief! Why should I grieve?

And yet for this,
that he is dead. He should still pine and dwine,°

hungry for his old lost strong food of life
vanished with me, hungry for children's love,
hungry for me. Ever to think of me—
with love, with hate, what care I? hate is love—
Ever to think and long. Oh it was well!
Yea, my new marriage hope has been achieved:
for he *did* count me happy, picture me
happy with Ægeus; he *did* dream of me
as all to Ægeus that I was to him,
and to him nothing; and *did* yearn for me
and know me lost—we two so far apart
as dead and living, I an envied wife
and he alone and childless. Jason, Jason,
come back to earth; live, live for my revenge.

But lo the man is dead: I am forgotten.
Forgotten; something goes from life in that—
as if oneself had died, when the half self
of one's true living time has slipped away
from reach of memories, has ceased to know
that such a woman is.

A wondrous thing
to be so separate having been so near—
near by hate last and once by so strong love.
Would love have kept us near if he had died
in the good days? Tush, I should have died too:
we should have gone together, hand in hand,
and made dusk Hades glorious each to each.

Ah me, if then when through the fitful seas
we saw the great rocks glimmer, and the crew
howled "We are lost! lo the Symplegades!"
too late to shun them, if but then some wave,
our secret friend, had dashed us from our course,
sending us to be shivered at the base,

well, well indeed! And yet what say I there?
Ten years together were they not worth cost
of all the anguish? Oh me, how I loved him!
Why did I not die loving him?

* * * * * *

What thou!
Have the dead no room, or do they drive thee forth
loathing thee near them? Dost thou threaten me?
Why, so I saw thee last, and was not scared:
think not to scare me now; I am no babe
to shiver at an unavailing shade.
Go, go, thou canst not curse me, none will hear:
the gods remember justice. Wrongs! thy wrongs!
the vengeance, ghost! What hast thou to avenge
as I have? Lo, thy meek-eyed Glaucè died,
and thy king-kinsman Creon died: but I,
I live what thou hast made me.

Oh smooth adder,
who with fanged kisses changedst my natural blood
to venom in me, say, didst thou not find me
a grave and simple girl in a still home,
learning my spells for pleasant services
or to make sick beds easier? With me went
the sweet sound of friends' voices praising me:
all faces smiled on me, even lifeless things
seemed glad because of me; and I could smile
to every face, to everything, to trees,
to skies and waters, to the passing herds,
to the small thievish sparrows, to the grass
with sunshine through it, to the weed's bold flowers:
for all things glad and harmless seemed my kin,
and all seemed glad and harmless in the world.
Thou cam'st, and from the day thou, finding me

in Hecate's dim grove to cull my herbs,
didst burn my cheeks with kisses hot and strange,
the curse of thee compelled me. Lo I am
the wretch thou say'st; but wherefore? by whose
work?
Who, binding me with dreadful marriage oaths
in the midnight temple, led my treacherous flight
from home and father? Whose voice when I turned,
desperate to save thee, on my own young brother,
my so loved brother, whose voice as I smote
nerved me, cried "Brave Medea"? For whose ends
did I decoy the credulous girls, poor fools,
to slay their father? When have I been base,
when cruel, save for thee, until—Man, man,
wilt thou accuse my guilt? Whose is my guilt?
mine or thine, Jason? Oh, soul of my crimes,
how shall I pardon thee for what I am?

Never. And if, with the poor womanish heart
that for the loving's sake will still love on,
I could let such a past wane as a dream
and turn to thee at waking—turn to thee!
I, put aside like some slight purchased slave
who pleased thee and then tired, still turn to thee!—
yet never, not if thou and I could live
thousands of years and all thy years were pain
and all my years were to behold thy pain,
never could I forgive thee for my boys;
never could I look on this hand of mine
that slew them and not hate thee. Childless thou,
what is thy childlessness to mine? Go, go,
thou foolish angry ghost, what wrongs hast thou?
would I could wrong thee more. Come thou
sometimes
and see me happy.

Dost thou mock at me
with thy cold smiling? Aye, can I not love?
What then? am I not folded round with love,
with a life's whole of love? There doth no thought
come near to Ægeus save what is of me:
am I no happy wife? And I go proud,
and treasure him for noblest of the world:
am I no happy wife?

Dost mock me still?
My children is it? Are the dead so wise?
Why, who told thee my transport of despair
when from the Sun who willed me not to die
nor creep away, sudden and too late came
the winged swift car that could have saved them,
mine,
from thee and from their foes? Tush, 'twas best so.
If they had lived, sometimes thou hadst had hope:
for thou wouldst still have said "I have two sons,"
and dreamed perchance they'd bring thee use at last
and build thy greatness higher: but now, now,
thou hast died shamed and childless, none to keep
thy name and memory fresh upon the earth,
none to make boast of thee "My father did it."

Yea, 'twas best so: my sons, we are avenged.
Thou, mock me not. What if I have ill dreams
to see them loathe me, fly from me in dread,
when I would feed my hungry mouth with kisses?
what if I moan in tossing fever thirsts,
crying for them whom I shall have no more,
here nor among the dead, who never more,
here nor among the dead, will smile to me
with young lips prattling "Mother, mother dear"?
what if I turn sick when the women pass

that lead their boys, and hate a child's young face?
265 what if—

Go, go, thou mind'st me of my sons,
and then I hate thee worse; go to thy grave
by which none weeps. I have forgotten thee.

1870

Endnotes

- Note 1: Medea is the protagonist of a play by Euripides that Webster translated and published in 1868. She is a sorcerer and princess who helps Jason and the Argonauts obtain the golden fleece. When Jason abandons her for Glaucè, Medea sends her two sons with a robe and diadem covered with poison. Both Glaucè and her father are killed. In Euripides' version, Medea also kills her two sons as revenge against her lover.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A pair of rocks that crashed together whenever a ship passed through them. Jason and the Argonauts survived by following Phineus's advice to send a dove before the ship to calculate how fast they would have to sail to avoid being crushed by the rocks.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: King of Athens who drowned himself when he believed his son Theseus had died; he gave his name to the Aegean Sea.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *actors, mimes*Return to reference °
- °: *waste away*Return to reference °

From Mother and Daughter[1]

An Uncompleted Sonnet-Sequence

I

Young laughters, and my music! Aye till now
  The voice can reach no blending minors near;
  ’Tis the bird’s trill because the spring is here
And spring means trilling on a blossomy bough;
’Tis the spring joy that has no why or how,
  But sees the sun and hopes not nor can fear—
  Spring is so sweet and spring seems all the year.
Dear voice, the first-come birds but trill as thou.

Oh music of my heart, be thus for long:
Too soon the spring bird learns the later song;
  Too soon a sadder sweetness slays content;
Too soon! There comes new light on onward day,
There comes new perfume o’er a rosier way:
  Comes not again the young spring joy that went.

II

That she is beautiful is not delight,
  As some think mothers joy, by pride of her,
  To witness questing eyes caught prisoner
And hear her praised the livelong dancing night;
But the glad impulse that makes painters sight
  Bids me note her and grow the happier;
  And love that finds me as her worshipper
Reveals me each best loveliness aright.

Oh goddess head! Oh innocent brave eyes!
Oh curved and parted lips where smiles are rare
And sweetness ever! Oh smooth shadowy hair
Gathered around the silence of her brow!
  Child, I'd needs love thy beauty strangerwise:
And oh the beauty of it, being thou!

III

I watch the sweet grave face in timorous thought
  Lest I should see it dawn to some unrest
  And read that in her heart is youth's ill guest,
The querulous young sadness, born of nought,
That wearies of the strife it has not fought,
  And finds the life it has not had unblest,
  And asks it knows not what that should be best,
And till Love come has never what it sought.

But she is still. A full and crystal lake
  So gives its skies their passage to its deeps
In an unruffled morn where no winds wake,
  And, strong and fretless, stirs not, nor yet sleeps.
My darling smiles and 'tis for gladness' sake;
  She hears a woe, 'tis simple tears she weeps.

IV

'Tis but a child. The quiet Juno[2] gaze
  Breaks at a trifle into mirth and glow,
  Changed as a folded bud bursts into blow,
And she springs, buoyant, on some busy craze,
Or, in the rhythm of her girlish plays,
  Like light upon swift waves floats to and fro,
  And, whatsoe'er's her mirth, needs me to know,
And keeps me young by her young innocent ways.

Just now she and her kitten raced and sprang
To catch the daisy ball she tossed about;
Then they grew grave, and found a shady tree,
And kitty tried to see the notes she sang:
Now she flies hitherward—"Mother! Quick! Come see!
Two hyacinths in my garden almost out!"

V

Last night the broad blue lightnings flamed the sky;
We watched, our breaths caught as each burst its way,
And through its fire out-leaped the sharp white ray,
And sudden dark re-closed when it went by:
But she, that where we are will needs be nigh,
Had tired with hunting orchids half the day.
Her father thought she called us; he and I,
Half anxious, reached the bedroom where she lay.

Oh lily face upon the whiteness blent!
How calm she lay in her unconscious grace!
A peal crashed on the silence ere we went;
She stirred in sleep, a little changed her place,
"Mother," she breathed, a smile grew on her face:
"Mother," my darling breathed, and slept content.

VI

Sometimes, as young things will, she vexes me,
Wayward, or too unheeding, or too blind.
Like aimless birds that, flying on a wind,
Strike slant against their own familiar tree;
Like venturous children pacing with the sea,

That turn but when the breaker spurts behind
Outreaching them with spray: she in such kind
Is borne against some fault, or does not flee.

And so, may be, I blame her for her wrong,
And she will frown and lightly plead her part,
And then I bid her go. But 'tis not long:
Then comes she lip to ear and heart to heart.
And thus forgiven her love seems newly strong,
And, oh my penitent, how dear thou art!

VII

Her father lessons me I at times am hard,
Chiding a moment's fault as too grave ill,
And let some little blot my vision fill,
Scanning her with a narrow near regard.
True. Love's unresting gaze is self-debarred
From all sweet ignorance, and learns a skill,
Not painless, of such signs as hurt love's will,
That would not have its prize one tittle marred.

Alas! Who rears and loves a dawning rose
Starts at a speck upon one petal's rim:
Who sees a dusk creep in the shrined pearl's glows,
Is ruined at once: "My jewel growing dim!"
I watch one bud that on my bosom blows,
I watch one treasured pearl for me and him.

VIII

A little child she, half defiant came
Reasoning her case—'twas not so long ago—
"I cannot mind your scolding, for I know
However bad I were you'd love the same."
And I, what countering answer could I frame?

'Twas true, and true, and God's self told her so.
One does but ask one's child to smile and grow,
And each rebuke has love for its right name.

And yet, methinks, sad mothers who for years,
Watching the child pass forth that was their boast,
Have counted all the footsteps by new fears
Till even lost fears seem hopes whereof they're reft
And of all mother's good love sole is left—
Is their Love, Love, or some remembered ghost?

IX

Oh weary hearts! Poor mothers that look back!
So outcasts from the vale where they were born
Turn on their road and, with a joy forlorn,
See the far roofs below their arid track:
So in chill buffets while the sea grows black
And windy skies, once blue, are tost and torn,
We are not yet forgetful of the morn,
And praise anew the sunshine that we lack.

Oh, sadder than pale sufferers by a tomb
That say "My dead is happier, and is more,"
Are they who dare no "is" but tell what's o'er—
Thus the frank childhood, those the lovable ways—
Stirring the ashes of remembered days
For yet some sparks to warm the livelong gloom.

X

Love's Counterfeit.

Not Love, not Love, that worn and footsore thrall
Who, crowned with withered buds and leaves gone dry,
Plods in his chains to follow one passed by,

Guerdoned° with only tears himself lets fall.
Love is asleep and smiling in his pall,
  And this that wears his shape and will not die
  Was once his comrade shadow, Memory—
His shadow that now stands for him in all.

And there are those who, hurrying on past reach,
  See the dim follower and laugh, content,
  "Lo, Love pursues me, go where'er I will!"
Yet, longer gazing, some may half beseech,
  "This *must* be Love that wears his features still:
Or else when was the moment that Love went?"

1895

Endnotes

- Note 1: Although never completed, the sequence contains twenty-seven sonnets.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Ancient Roman goddess, protector of the state and Roman women.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *rewarded*Return to reference °

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE
1837–1909

In a review of Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857), Algernon Charles Swinburne remarks that "the mass of readers seem actually to think that a poem is the better for containing a moral lesson." He goes on to praise the courage and sense of a man who acts on the conviction "that the art of poetry has nothing to do with didactic matter at all." Certainly Swinburne's poems are not didactic in the sense of containing traditional moral values. As John Morley commented while reviewing Swinburne's first volume of poems, "He is so firmly and avowedly fixed in an attitude of revolt against the current notions of decency and dignity and social duty that to beg of him to be a little more decent, to fly a little less persistently and gleefully to the animal side of human nature, is simply to beg him to be something different from Mr. Swinburne." Swinburne set about shocking his elders by a variety of rebellious gestures. In religion he appeared to be a pagan; in politics, a liberal republican dedicated to the overthrow of established governments. On the subjects of love and sex, he was similarly unconventional. Frequently preoccupied with the pleasures of the lover who inflicts or accepts pain (particularly with the excitement of flagellation), Swinburne also often turns in his poetry to the theme of homoerotic desire, a taboo topic for his Victorian audience. As Arnold Bennett said of "Anactoria" (1866), a dramatic monologue in which the poet Sappho addresses a woman with whom she is madly in love, Swinburne

played "a rare trick" on England by "enshrining in the topmost heights of its literature a lovely poem that cannot be discussed."

To a more limited extent, Swinburne also expressed his rebellion against established codes by his personal behavior. He came from a distinguished family and attended Eton and Oxford, but sought the company of the bohemians of Paris and of London, where he became temporarily associated with Dante Gabriel Rossetti and other Pre-Raphaelites. By 1879 his alcoholism had profoundly affected his frail physique, and he was obliged to put himself into the protective custody of a friend, Theodore Watts-Dunton, who took him to the countryside and kept him alive, although sobered and tamed.

Swinburne continued to write voluminously and sometimes memorably, but his most fascinating poetry appeared in his early publications. He described his early play *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865) as "pure Greek," and his command of classical allusions here, as well as in other poems, is indeed impressive. Yet the kind of spirit that he found in Greek literature was not the traditional quality of classic serenity admired by Matthew Arnold. Like Percy Bysshe Shelley (the poet he most closely resembles), Swinburne loved Greece as a land of liberty in which men had expressed themselves with the fewest restraints.

In his play and in the volume that followed it, *Poems and Ballads* (1866), Swinburne demonstrated a metrical virtuosity that dazzled his early readers and is still dazzling. Those who demand that poetry should make sense, first and foremost, may find that much of his poetry is not to their taste. What he offers, instead, are heady rhythmical patterns in which words are relished as much for their sound as for their meaning.

> There lived a singer in France of old
> By the tideless dolorous midland sea.
> In a land of sand and ruin and gold
> Here shone one woman, and none but she.

These lines from "The Triumph of Time" (1866) have often been cited to illustrate Swinburne's qualities. Like some poems of the later

French symbolists, such passages defy traditional kinds of critical analysis and oblige us to reconsider the variety of ways in which poetry may achieve its effects.

Another noteworthy aspect of these poems is their recurring preoccupation with death, as in the memorable re-creations of Proserpina's underworld garden, frozen in timelessness. And as the critic Jerome McGann notes: "No English poet has composed more elegies than Swinburne." The death of any prominent figure, such as Robert Browning, almost always prompted Swinburne to compose a poem for the occasion. "Ave atque Vale" (1868), his farewell to Baudelaire, is an especially moving tribute, and shows Swinburne focusing on a subject extremely close to his heart. For Swinburne the work of his beloved French poet possessed a "languid, lurid beauty"; to us the phrase may seem equally applicable to Swinburne's poetry.

Hymn to Proserpine

(*After the Proclamation in Rome of the Christian Faith*)

Vicisti, Galilaee[1]

I have lived long enough, having seen one thing, that love hath an end;
Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now and befriend.
Thou art more than the day or the morrow, the seasons that laugh or that weep;
For these give joy and sorrow; but thou, Proserpina, sleep.
Sweet is the treading of wine, and sweet the feet of the dove;
But a goodlier gift is thine than foam of the grapes or love.
Yea, is not even Apollo,[2] with hair and harpstring of gold,
A bitter god to follow, a beautiful god to behold?
I am sick of singing; the bays[3] burn deep and chafe. I am fain°
To rest a little from praise and grievous pleasure and pain.
For the gods we know not of, who give us our daily breath,
We know they are cruel as love or life, and lovely as death.

O gods dethroned and deceased, cast forth, wiped out in a day!
From your wrath is the world released, redeemed from your chains, men say.
New gods are crowned in the city; their flowers have broken your rods;
They are merciful, clothed with pity, the young compassionate gods.
But for me their new device is barren, the days are bare;
Things long past over suffice, and men forgotten that were.
Time and the gods are at strife; ye dwell in the midst thereof,
Draining a little life from the barren breasts of love.
I say to you, cease, take rest; yea, I say to you all, be at peace,
Till the bitter milk of her breast and the barren bosom shall cease.
Wilt thou yet take all, Galilean? But these thou shalt not take—
The laurel, the palms, and the paean, the breasts of the nymphs in the brake,°
Breasts more soft than a dove's, that tremble with tenderer breath;
And all the wings of the Loves, and all the joy before death;

All the feet of the hours that sound as a single lyre,
Dropped and deep in the flowers, with strings that flicker like fire.
More than these wilt thou give, things fairer than all these things?
Nay, for a little we live, and life hath mutable wings.
A little while and we die; shall life not thrive as it may?
For no man under the sky lives twice, outliving his day.
And grief is a grievous thing, and a man hath enough of his tears;
Why should he labor, and bring fresh grief to blacken his years?

Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown gray from thy breath;
We have drunken of things Lethean,[4] and fed on the fullness of death.
Laurel is green for a season, and love is sweet for a day;
But love grows bitter with treason, and laurel outlives not May.
Sleep, shall we sleep after all? for the world is not sweet in the end;
For the old faiths loosen and fall, the new years ruin and rend.
Fate is a sea without shore, and the soul is a rock that abides;
But her ears are vexed with the roar and her face with the foam of the tides.
O lips that the live blood faints in, the leavings of racks and rods!
O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted gods!
Though all men abase them before you in spirit, and all knees bend,
I kneel not, neither adore you, but standing look to the end.

All delicate days and pleasant, all spirits and sorrows are cast
Far out with the foam of the present that sweeps to the surf of the past;
Where beyond the extreme sea wall, and between the remote sea gates,
Waste water washes, and tall ships founder, and deep death waits;
Where, mighty with deepening sides, clad about with the seas as with wings,
And impelled of invisible tides, and fulfilled of unspeakable things,
White-eyed and poisonous-finned, shark-toothed and serpentine-curled,
Rolls, under the whitening wind of the future, the wave of the world.
The depths stand naked in sunder behind it, the storms flee away;
In the hollow before it the thunder is taken and snared as a prey;
In its sides is the north wind bound; and its salt is of all men's tears,
With light of ruin, and sound of changes, and pulse of years;
With travail of day after day, and with trouble of hour upon hour.
And bitter as blood is the spray; and the crests are as fangs that devour;

And its vapor and storm of its steam as the sighing of spirits to be;
And its noise as the noise in a dream; and its depths as the roots of the sea;
And the height of its heads as the height of the utmost stars of the air;
And the ends of the earth at the might thereof tremble, and time is made bare.
Will ye bridle the deep sea with reins, will ye chasten the high sea with rods?[5]
Will ye take her to chain her with chains, who is older than all ye gods?
All ye as a wind shall go by, as a fire shall ye pass and be past;
Ye are gods, and behold, ye shall die, and the waves be upon you at last.
In the darkness of time, in the deeps of the years, in the changes of things,
Ye shall sleep as a slain man sleeps, and the world shall forget you or kings.
Though the feet of thine high priests tread where thy lords and our forefathers trod,
Though these that were gods are dead, and thou being dead art a god,
Though before thee the throned Cytherean[6] be fallen, and hidden her head,
Yet thy kingdom shall pass, Galilean, thy dead shall go down to thee dead.

Of the maiden thy mother men sing as a goddess with grace clad around;
Thou art throned where another was king; where another was queen she is crowned.
Yea, once we had sight of another; but now she is queen, say these.
Not as thine, not as thine was our mother, a blossom of flowering seas,
Clothed round with the world's desire as with raiment, and fair as the foam.
And fleeter than kindled fire, and a goddess, and mother of Rome.[7]
For thine came pale and a maiden, and sister to sorrow; but ours,
Her deep hair heavily laden with odour and colour of flowers,
White rose of the rose-white water, a silver splendour, a flame,
Bent down unto us that besought her, and earth grew sweet with her name.
For thine came weeping, a slave among slaves, and rejected; but she
Came flushed from the full-flushed wave, and imperial, her foot on the sea.

And the wonderful waters knew her, the winds and the viewless ways,
And the roses grew rosier, and bluer the sea-blue stream of the bays.

Ye are fallen, our lords, by what token? we wist that ye should not fall.
Ye were all so fair that are broken; and one more fair than ye all.
But I turn to her° still, having seen she shall surely abide in
the end.
Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now and befriend.
O daughter of earth, of my mother, her crown and blossom of birth,
I am also, I also, thy brother; I go as I came unto earth.
In the night where thine eyes are as moons are in heaven, the night where
thou art,
Where the silence is more than all tunes, where sleep overflows from the
heart,
Where the poppies are sweet as the rose in our world, and the red rose is
white,
And the wind falls faint as it blows with the fume of the flowers of the
night,
And the murmur of spirits that sleep in the shadow of gods from afar
Grows dim in thine ears and deep as the deep dim soul of a star,
In the sweet low light of thy face, under heavens untrod by the sun,
Let my soul with their souls find place, and forget what is done and
undone.
Thou art more than the gods who number the days of our temporal
breath;
For these give labor and slumber; but thou, Proserpina, death.
Therefore now at thy feet I abide for a season in silence. I know
I shall die as my fathers died, and sleep as they sleep; even so.
For the glass° of the years is brittle wherein we gaze for a span.
A little soul for a little bears up this corpse which is man.
So long I endure, no longer; and laugh not again, neither weep.
For there is no god found stronger than death; and death is a sleep.

1866

Endnotes

- Note 1: Thou hast conquered, O Galilean (Latin); words supposedly addressed to Jesus, who grew up in Galilee, by the Roman emperor

Julian the Apostate on his deathbed in 363. Julian had tried to revive paganism and to discourage Christianity, which, after a proclamation in 313, had been tolerated in Rome. His efforts were unsuccessful. The speaker of the poem, a Roman patrician and also a poet (line 9), is like Emperor Julian: he prefers the old order of pagan gods. His hymn is addressed to the goddess Proserpina (the Greek Persephone), who was carried off by Pluto (Hades) to be queen of the underworld. In this role she is addressed in the poem as goddess of death and of sleep. The speaker also associates her with the earth (line 93) because she was the daughter of Ceres (or Demeter), goddess of agriculture, whose Greek name means "Earth Mother." Swinburne may have derived some details here from the 4th-century Latin poet Claudian, whose long narrative *The Rape of Proserpina* provides helpful background for this hymn.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Classical god of poetry, and in art the ideal of young male beauty.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Laurel leaves of a poet's crown.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, of Lethe (literally, "Forgetfulness"), a river in the underworld.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: According to the ancient Greek historian Herodotus, after storm waves destroyed his bridge the enraged Xerxes, king of the Persians, ordered that the Hellespont be whipped; see *History* 7.33–34.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Venus (or Aphrodite), who was born from the waves near the island of Cythera.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Romans traced their legendary origins back to Aeneas, a Trojan prince who was the son of Aphrodite.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *glad*Return to reference °
- °: *thicket*Return to reference °
- °: *Proserpina*Return to reference °
- °: *mirror*Return to reference °

Hermaphroditus[1]

1

Lift up thy lips, turn round, look back for love,
  Blind love that comes by night and casts out rest
  Of all things tired thy lips look weariest,
Save the long smile that they are wearied of.
Ah sweet, albeit no love be sweet enough,
  Choose of two loves and cleave unto the best;
  Two loves at either blossom of thy breast
Strive until one be under and one above.
Their breath is fire upon the amorous air,
Fire in thine eyes and where thy lips suspire:°
And whosoever hath seen thee, being so fair,
  Two things turn all his life and blood to fire;
A strong desire begot on great despair,
  A great despair cast out by strong desire.

2

Where between sleep and life some brief space is,
  With love like gold bound round about the head,
  Sex to sweet sex with lips and limbs is wed,
Turning the fruitful feud of hers and his
To the waste wedlock of a sterile kiss;
  Yet from them something like as fire is shed
  That shall not be assuaged till death be dead,
Though neither life nor sleep can find out this.
Love made himself of flesh that perisheth
  A pleasure-house for all the loves his kin;
But on the one side sat a man like death,
  And on the other a woman sat like sin.

So with veiled eyes and sobs between his breath
Love turned himself and would not enter in.

3

Love, is it love or sleep or shadow or light
That lies between thine eyelids and thine eyes?
Like a flower laid upon a flower it lies,
Or like the night's dew laid upon the night.
Love stands upon thy left hand and thy right,
Yet by no sunset and by no moonrise
Shall make thee man and ease a woman's sighs,
Or make thee woman for a man's delight.
To what strange end hath some strange god made fair
The double blossom of two fruitless flowers?
Hid love in all the folds of all thy hair,
Fed thee on summers, watered thee with showers,
Given all the gold that all the seasons wear
To thee that art a thing of barren hours?

4

Yea, love, I see; it is not love but fear.
Nay, sweet, it is not fear but love, I know;
Or wherefore should thy body's blossom blow
So sweetly, or thine eyelids leave so clear
Thy gracious eyes that never made a tear—
Though for their love our tears like blood should flow,
Though love and life and death should come and go,
So dreadful, so desirable, so dear?
Yea, sweet, I know; I saw in what swift wise°
Beneath the woman's and the water's kiss
Thy moist limbs melted into Salmacis,
And the large light turned tender in thine eyes,

And all thy boy's breath softened into sighs;
But Love being blind,[2] how should he know of this?

Au Musée du Louvre, *Mars* 1863.[3]

1863 1866

Endnotes

- Note 1: Son of Hermes and Aphrodite. One day as he bathed in a spring, Salmacis, the nymph of the spring, fell in love with him. When he rejected her, she clung to him, praying that their bodies never be separated. The gods answered her prayer, making their bodies one. The statue in the Louvre that inspired this poem, a Roman copy of a Greek original, shows the god lying on his side, with the breasts of a woman and the genitals of a man.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Love, personified in classical mythology as Eros or Cupid, is often represented as blindfolded or blind.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: At the Museum of the Louvre, March 1863 (French).Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *breathe out*Return to reference °
- °: *how swiftly*Return to reference °

Ave atque Vale[1]

In Memory of Charles Baudelaire

Nous devrions pourtant lui porter quelques fleurs;
Les morts, les pauvres morts, ont de grandes douleurs,
Et quand Octobre souffle, émondeur des vieux arbres,
Son vent mélancolique à l'entour de leurs marbres,
Certe, ils doivent trouver les vivants bien ingrats.

—"Les Fleurs du Mal"[2]

1

Shall I strew on thee rose or rue or laurel,[3]
Brother, on this that was the veil[4] of thee?
Or quiet sea-flower molded by the sea,
Or simplest growth of meadow-sweet or sorrel,
Such as the summer-sleepy Dryads° weave,
Waked up by snow-soft sudden rains at eve?
Or wilt thou rather, as on earth before,
Half-faded fiery blossoms, pale with heat
And full of bitter summer, but more sweet
To thee than gleanings of a northern shore
Trod by no tropic feet?[5]

2

For always thee the fervid languid glories
Allured of heavier suns in mightier skies;
Thine ears knew all the wandering watery sighs
Where the sea sobs round Lesbian promontories,

The barren kiss of piteous wave to wave
That knows not where is that Leucadian grave[6]
Which hides too deep the supreme head of song.
Ah, salt and sterile as her kisses were,
The wild sea winds her and the green gulfs bear
Hither and thither, and vex and work her wrong,
Blind gods that cannot spare.

3

Thou sawest, in thine old singing season, brother,
Secrets and sorrows unbeheld of us:
Fierce loves, and lovely leaf-buds poisonous,
Bare to thy subtler eye, but for none other
Blowing by night in some unbreathed-in clime;
The hidden harvest of luxurious time,
Sin without shape, and pleasure without speech;
And where strange dreams in a tumultuous sleep
Make the shut eyes of stricken spirits weep;
And with each face thou sawest the shadow on each,
Seeing as men sow men reap.[7]

4

O sleepless heart and sombre soul unsleeping,
That were athirst for sleep and no more life
And no more love, for peace and no more strife!
Now the dim gods of death have in their keeping
Spirit and body and all the springs of song,
Is it well now where love can do no wrong,
Where stingless pleasure has no foam or fang
Behind the unopening closure of her lips?
Is it not well where soul from body slips
And flesh from bone divides without a pang

As dew from flower-bell drips?

5

It is enough; the end and the beginning
Are one thing to thee, who art past the end.
O hand unclasped of unbeholden friend,
For thee no fruits to pluck, no palms for winning,
No triumph and no labour and no lust,
Only dead yew-leaves and a little dust.
O quiet eyes wherein the light saith naught,
Whereto the day is dumb, nor any night
With obscure finger silences your sight,
Nor in your speech the sudden soul speaks thought,
Sleep, and have sleep for light.

6

Now all strange hours and all strange loves are over,
Dreams and desires and sombre songs and sweet,
Hast thou found place at the great knees and feet
Of some pale Titan-woman like a lover,
Such as thy vision here solicited,[8]
Under the shadow of her fair vast head,
The deep division of prodigious breasts,
The solemn slope of mighty limbs asleep,
The weight of awful tresses that still keep
The savor and shade of old-world pine forests
Where the wet hill-winds weep?

7

Hast thou found any likeness for thy vision?
O gardener of strange flowers, what bud, what bloom,

Hast thou found sown, what gathered in the gloom?
What of despair, of rapture, of derision,
What of life is there, what of ill or good?
Are the fruits grey like dust or bright like blood?
Does the dim ground grow any seed of ours,
The faint fields quicken any terrene° root,
In low lands where the sun and moon are mute
And all the stars keep silence? Are there flowers
At all, or any fruit?

8

Alas, but though my flying song flies after,
O sweet strange elder singer, thy more fleet
Singing, and footprints of thy fleeter feet,
Some dim derision of mysterious laughter
From the blind tongueless warders of the dead,
Some gainless glimpse of Proserpine's[9] veiled head,
Some little sound of unregarded tears
Wept by effaced unprofitable eyes,
And from pale mouths some cadence of dead sighs—
These only, these the hearkening spirit hears,
Sees only such things rise.

9

Thou art far too far for wings of words to follow,
Far too far off for thought or any prayer.
What ails us with thee, who are wind and air?
What ails us gazing where all seen is hollow?
Yet with some fancy, yet with some desire,
Dreams pursue death as winds a flying fire,

Our dreams pursue our dead and do not find.
Still, and more swift than they, the thin flame flies,
The low light fails us in elusive skies,
Still the foiled earnest ear is deaf, and blind
Are still the eluded eyes.

10

Not thee, O never thee, in all time's changes,
Not thee, but this the sound of thy sad soul,
The shadow of thy swift spirit, this shut scroll
I lay my hand on, and not death estranges
My spirit from communion of thy song—
These memories and these melodies that throng
Veiled porches of a Muse funereal[1]—
These I salute, these touch, these clasp and fold
As though a hand were in my hand to hold,
Or through mine ears a mourning musical[2]
Of many mourners rolled.

11

I among these, I also, in such station
As when the pyre was charred, and piled the sods,
And offering to the dead made, and their gods,
The old mourners had, standing to make libation,
I stand, and to the gods and to the dead
Do reverence without prayer or praise, and shed
Offering to these unknown, the gods of gloom,
And what of honey and spice my seedlands bear,
And what I may of fruits in this chilled air,
And lay, Orestes-like, across the tomb
A curl of severed hair.[3]

12

But by no hand nor any treason stricken,
Not like the low-lying head of Him, the King,
The flame that made of Troy a ruinous thing,
Thou liest, and on this dust no tears could quicken
There fall no tears like theirs[4] that all men hear
Fall tear by sweet imperishable tear
Down the opening leaves of holy poets' pages.
Thee not Orestes, not Electra mourns;
But bending us-ward with memorial urns
The most high Muses that fulfill all ages
Weep, and our God's heart yearns.

13

For, sparing of his sacred strength, not often
Among us darkling here the lord of light[5]
Makes manifest his music and his might
In hearts that open and in lips that soften
With the soft flame and heat of songs that shine.
Thy lips indeed he touched with bitter wine,
And nourished them indeed with bitter bread;
Yet surely from his hand thy soul's food came;
The fire that scarred thy spirit at his flame
Was lighted, and thine hungering heart he fed
Who feeds our hearts with fame.

14

Therefore he too now at thy soul's sunsetting,
God of all suns and songs he too bends down
To mix his laurel with thy cypress[6] crown.
And save thy dust from blame and from forgetting,
Therefore he too, seeing all thou wert and art,
Compassionate, with sad and sacred heart,
Mourns thee of many his children the last dead,

And hallows with strange tears and alien sighs
Thine unmelodious mouth and sunless eyes,
And over thine irrevocable head
Sheds light from the under skies.[7]

15

And one weeps with him in the ways Lethean,[8]
And stains with tears her changing bosom chill;
That obscure Venus of the hollow hill,
That thing transformed which was the Cytherean,
With lips that lost their Grecian laugh divine
Long since, and face no more called Erycine;[9]
A ghost, a bitter and luxurious god.
Thee also with fair flesh and singing spell
Did she, a sad and second prey,[1] compel
Into the footless places once more trod,
And shadows hot from hell.

16

And now no sacred staff shall break in blossom,[2]
No choral salutation lure to light
A spirit sick with perfume and sweet night
And love's tired eyes and hands and barren bosom.
There is no help for these things; none to mend
And none to mar; not all our songs, O friend,
Will make death clear or make life durable.
Howbeit with rose and ivy and wild vine
And with wild notes about this dust of thine
At least I fill the place where white dreams dwell[3]
And wreathe an unseen shrine.

17

Sleep; and if life was bitter to thee, pardon,
If sweet, give thanks; thou hast no more to live;
And to give thanks is good, and to forgive.
Out of the mystic and the mournful garden
Where all day through thine hands in barren braid
Wove the sick flowers of secrecy and shade,
Green buds of sorrow and sin, and remnants grey,
Sweet-smelling, pale with poison, sanguine-hearted,
Passions that sprang from sleep and thoughts that started,
Shall death not bring us all as thee one day
Among the days departed?

18

For thee, O now a silent soul, my brother,
Take at my hands this garland, and farewell.
Thin is the leaf, and chill the wintry smell,
And chill the solemn earth, a fatal mother,
With sadder than the Niobean womb,[4]
And in the hollow of her breasts a tomb.
Content thee, howsoe'er, whose days are done;
There lies not any troublous thing before,
Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,
All waters as the shore.

1866–67 1868

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Hail and farewell (Latin); from an elegy by Catullus occasioned by a visit to the grave of his brother, to whom he brought gifts, a situation closely echoed in Swinburne's final stanza. Swinburne's elegy also begins with a visit to the grave of a man

whom the poet regards as a brother but had never met. Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) had impressed Swinburne as one of the "most perfect poets of the century." In 1861, in an essay on the 2nd edition of Baudelaire's collection *Les Fleurs du Mal* (*Flowers of Evil*, 1857), Swinburne had commented on the French poet's preoccupation with "sad and strange things"—"the sharp and cruel enjoyments of pain, the acrid relish of suffering felt or inflicted"; "it has the languid, lurid beauty of close and threatening weather—a heavy, heated temperature, with dangerous hothouse scents in it." These qualities are also celebrated in the elegy, into which are woven many allusions to Baudelaire's poems, especially "Litanies de Satan," which Swinburne regarded as the keynote poem of *Les Fleurs du Mal.* Return to reference 1

- Note 2:
  From "La Servante au Grand Coeur" ("The Great-hearted Servant"): We must nevertheless bring some flowers to her [or him]. / The dead, the poor dead, have great sadnesses, / And when October, the pruner of old trees, blows, / Its melancholy wind in the vicinity of their marble tombs, / Then indeed they must find the living highly ungrateful (French).
  Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Respectively, symbols of love, mourning, and poetic fame.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, the body as a veil for the soul.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A voyage to the tropics in Baudelaire's youth made a lasting impact on his poetry.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: According to legend, the poet Sappho, who was born on the island of Lesbos, killed herself by leaping from the rock of Leucas into the Ionian Sea. In this section Swinburne makes allusions to Baudelaire's "Lesbos."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Compare with Galatians 6:7: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: An allusion to Baudelaire's "La Géante" ("The Giantess").Return to reference 8

- Note 9: Queen of the underworld.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: According to Jerome McGann, Swinburne associates Baudelaire's distinctive kind of poetry with a tenth muse, one who inspires songs of lamentation ("funereal").Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, a musical mourning.Return to reference 2
- Note 3:
  For lines 120–29, see *The Libation Bearers*, the second play in Aeschylus's *Oresteia* trilogy. King Agamemnon, after returning home victorious from Troy, is brutally killed by his wife, Clytemnestra. His son, Orestes, places two locks of his hair on Agamemnon's grave in tribute; they are discovered soon thereafter by his sister Electra, who visits her father's grave to offer mourning libations.
  Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Referring to the muses and holy poets, not to Orestes and Electra [noted by Jerome McGann].Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Apollo, god of light and poetry.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Associated with mourning. "Laurel": the crown of Apollo, a wreath honoring poets.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, flickering light of the underworld.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Of Lethe, the river of forgetfulness in Hades.Return to reference 8
- Note 9:
  The Venus of medieval legends held her court inside a mountain in Germany (the Hörselberg). This later Venus is a transformed version of the joyous foam-born goddess associated with the island of Cythera and also worshipped in Sicily at a shrine on Mount Eryx (hence "Erycine"). The Roman poet Horace described her as "blithe goddess of Eryx, about whom hover mirth and desire" (*Odes* 1.2.33–34).
  Return to reference 9
- Note 1:
  The first "prey" of Venus had been Tannhäuser, whom she had lured into the "footless places" of her cave. Baudelaire is her

"second prey." Swinburne, after reading Baudelaire's 1861 pamphlet on Wagner's *Tannhäuser* (1845), described this Venus as "the queen of evil, the lady of lust."
Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Such a miraculous event occurred when Tannhäuser made a pilgrimage to Rome to seek absolution for having lived in sin with Venus. Previously the pope had denied absolution until the day his staff should bloom.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Presumably the abode of the ghosts of the dead.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: After Niobe boasted of having more children than the goddess Leto, the goddess's children—Apollo and Diana (Artemis)—killed them all.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *wood nymphs*Return to reference °
- °: *earthly*Return to reference °

WALTER PATER
1839–1894

Studies in the History of the Renaissance, a collection of essays published in 1873, was the first of several volumes that established Walter Pater as one of the most influential writers of the late Victorian period. His flair for critical writing may have first been sparked when he was an undergraduate at Oxford (1858–62), where he heard and enjoyed the lectures of Matthew Arnold, who was then professor of poetry. After graduation Pater remained at Oxford, a shy bachelor who spent his life teaching classics. In view of his quiet disposition Pater was surprised and even alarmed by the impact made by his books on young readers of the 1870s and 1880s. Some of his younger followers such as Oscar Wilde and George Moore may have misread him. As T. S. Eliot wrote somewhat primly, "[Pater's] view of art, as expressed in *The Renaissance,* impressed itself upon a number of writers in the nineties, and propagated some confusion between life and art which is not wholly irresponsible for some untidy lives." It can be demonstrated that Pater's writings (especially his historical novel *Marius the Epicurean*, 1885) have much in common with the works of his earnest-minded mid-Victorian predecessors, but his disciples overlooked these similarities. To them his work seemed strikingly different and, in its quiet way, more subversive than the head-on attacks against traditional Victorianism made by Algernon Charles Swinburne. Instead of recommending a continuation of the painful quest for Truth that had dominated

Oxford in the days of John Henry Newman, Pater assured his readers that the quest was pointless. Truth, he said, is relative. And instead of echoing Thomas Carlyle's call to duty and social responsibilities, Pater reminded his readers that life passes quickly and that our only responsibility is to enjoy fully "this short day of frost and sun"—to relish its sensations, especially those sensations provoked by works of art.

This epicurean gospel was conveyed in a highly wrought prose style that baffles anyone who likes to read quickly. Pater believed that prose was as difficult an art as poetry, and he expected his own elaborate sentences to be savored. Like Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880), the French novelist whom he admired, Pater painstakingly revised his sentences with special attention to their rhythms, seeking always the right word—*le mot juste*, as Flaubert called it. For many years Pater's day would begin with his making a careful study of a dictionary. What Pater said of Dante is an apt description of his own polished style: "He is one of those artists whose general effect largely depends on vocabulary, on the minute particles of which his work is wrought, on the colour and outline of single words and phrases." An additional characteristic of his highly wrought style is its relative absence of humor. Pater was valued among his friends for his flashes of wit and for his lively and irreverent conversation, but in his writings such traits are suppressed. As Michael Levey observed in *The Case of Walter Pater* (1978), "Even for irony the mood of his writing is almost too intense."

In addition to being a key figure in the transition from mid-Victorianism to the "decadence" of the 1890s, Pater commands our attention as the writer of exemplary impressionistic criticism. In each of his essays he seeks to communicate what he called the "special unique impression of pleasure" made on him by the works of some artist or writer. His range of subjects included the dialogues of Plato, the paintings of Leonardo da Vinci, the plays of Shakespeare, and the writings of the French Romantic school of the nineteenth century. Of particular value to students of English literature are his discriminating studies of William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor

Coleridge, Charles Lamb, and Sir Thomas Browne in his volume of *Appreciations* (1889) and his essay on the poetry of William Morris titled "Aesthetic Poetry" (1868). These and other essays by Pater were praised by Oscar Wilde in a review in 1890 as "absolutely modern, in the true meaning of the term modernity. For he to whom the present is the only thing that is present, knows nothing of the age in which he lives. . . . The true critic is he who bears within himself the dreams and ideas and feelings of myriad generations, and to whom no form of thought is alien, no emotional impulse obscure."

The final sentences of his *Appreciations* volume are a revealing indication of Pater's critical position. After having attempted to show the differences between the classical and romantic schools of art, he concludes that most great artists combine the qualities of both. "To discriminate schools, of art, of literature," he writes, "is, of course, part of the obvious business of literary criticism: but, in the work of literary production, it is easy to be overmuch occupied concerning them. For, in truth, the legitimate contention is, not of one age or school of literary art against another, but of all successive schools alike, against the stupidity which is dead to the substance, and the vulgarity which is dead to form."

From Studies in the History of the Renaissance

Preface

Many attempts have been made by writers on art and poetry to define beauty in the abstract, to express it in the most general terms, to find some universal formula for it. The value of these attempts has most often been in the suggestive and penetrating things said by the way. Such discussions help us very little to enjoy what has been well done in art or poetry, to discriminate between what is more and what is less excellent in them, or to use words like beauty, excellence, art, poetry, with a more precise meaning than they would otherwise have. Beauty, like all other qualities presented to human experience, is relative; and the definition of it becomes unmeaning and useless in proportion to its abstractness. To define beauty, not in the most abstract but in the most concrete terms possible, to find not its universal formula, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation of it, is the aim of the true student of aesthetics.

"To see the object as in itself it really is,"[1] has been justly said to be the aim of all true criticism whatever; and in aesthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realize it distinctly. The objects with which aesthetic criticism deals—music, poetry, artistic and accomplished forms of human life—are indeed receptacles of so many powers or forces: they possess, like the products of nature, so many virtues or qualities. What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to *me?* What effect does it really produce on me? Does it give me pleasure? and if so, what sort or degree of pleasure? How is my nature modified by its presence, and under its influence? The answers to these questions are the original facts with which the aesthetic critic has to do; and, as in the study of light, of morals, of number, one must realize such primary data for one's self, or not at all. And he who experiences these impressions strongly, and drives directly at the discrimination and analysis of them, has no need to trouble himself with the abstract question what beauty is in itself, or

what its exact relation to truth or experience—metaphysical questions, as unprofitable as metaphysical questions elsewhere. He may pass them all by as being, answerable or not, of no interest to him.

The aesthetic critic, then, regards all the objects with which he has to do, all works of art, and the fairer forms of nature and human life, as powers or forces producing pleasurable sensations, each of a more or less peculiar or unique kind. This influence he feels, and wishes to explain, by analyzing and reducing it to its elements. To him, the picture, the landscape, the engaging personality in life or in a book, "La Gioconda," the hills of Carrara, Pico of Mirandola,[2] are valuable for their virtues, as we say, in speaking of a herb, a wine, a gem; for the property each has of affecting one with a special, a unique, impression of pleasure. Our education becomes complete in proportion as our susceptibility to these impressions increases in depth and variety. And the function of the aesthetic critic is to distinguish, to analyze, and separate from its adjuncts, the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book, produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced. His end is reached when he has disengaged that virtue, and noted it, as a chemist notes some natural element, for himself and others; and the rule for those who would reach this end is stated with great exactness in the words of a recent critic of Sainte-Beuve: *De se borner à connaître de près les belles choses, et à s'en nourrir en exquis amateurs, en humanistes accomplis.*[3]

What is important, then, is not that the critic should possess a correct abstract definition of beauty for the intellect, but a certain kind of temperament, the power of being deeply moved by the presence of beautiful objects. He will remember always that beauty exists in many forms. To him all periods, types, schools of taste, are in themselves equal. In all ages there have been some excellent workmen, and some excellent work done. The question he asks is always: In whom did the stir, the genius, the sentiment of the period find itself? where was the receptacle of its refinement, its elevation,

its taste? "The ages are all equal," says William Blake, "but genius is always above its age."[4]

Often it will require great nicety to disengage this virtue from the commoner elements with which it may be found in combination. Few artists, not Goethe or Byron even, work quite cleanly, casting off all debris, and leaving us only what the heat of their imagination has wholly fused and transformed. Take, for instance, the writings of Wordsworth. The heat of his genius, entering into the substance of his work, has crystallized a part, but only a part, of it; and in that great mass of verse there is much which might well be forgotten. But scattered up and down it, sometimes fusing and transforming entire compositions, like the stanzas on *Resolution and Independence,* or the *Ode on the Recollections of Childhood,*[5] sometimes, as if at random, depositing a fine crystal here or there, in a matter it does not wholly search through and transmute, we trace the action of his unique, incommunicable faculty, that strange, mystical sense of a life in natural things, and of man's life as a part of nature, drawing strength and color and character from local influences, from the hills and streams, and from natural sights and sounds. Well! that is the *virtue,* the active principle in Wordsworth's poetry; and then the function of the critic of Wordsworth is to follow up that active principle, to disengage it, to mark the degree in which it penetrates his verse.

The subjects of the following studies are taken from the history of the *Renaissance,* and touch what I think the chief points in that complex, many-sided movement. I have explained in the first of them what I understand by the word, giving it a much wider scope than was intended by those who originally used it to denote that revival of classical antiquity in the fifteenth century which was only one of many results of a general excitement and enlightening of the human mind, but of which the great aim and achievements of what, as Christian art, is often falsely opposed to the Renaissance, were another result. This outbreak of the human spirit may be traced far into the Middle Age itself, with its motives already clearly pronounced, the care for physical beauty, the worship of the body,

the breaking down of those limits which the religious system of the Middle Age imposed on the heart and the imagination. I have taken as an example of this movement, this earlier Renaissance within the Middle Age itself, and as an expression of its qualities, two little compositions in early French; not because they constitute the best possible expression of them, but because they help the unity of my series, inasmuch as the Renaissance ends also in France, in French poetry, in a phase of which the writings of Joachim du Bellay[6] are in many ways the most perfect illustration. The Renaissance, in truth, put forth in France an aftermath, a wonderful later growth, the products of which have to the full that subtle and delicate sweetness which belongs to a refined and comely decadence, just as its earliest phases have the freshness which belongs to all periods of growth in art, the charm of *ascêsis,*[7] of the austere and serious girding of the loins in youth.

But it is in Italy, in the fifteenth century, that the interest of the Renaissance mainly lies—in that solemn fifteenth century which can hardly be studied too much, not merely for its positive results in the things of the intellect and the imagination, its concrete works of art, its special and prominent personalities, with their profound aesthetic charm, but for its general spirit and character, for the ethical qualities of which it is a consummate type.

The various forms of intellectual activity which together make up the culture of an age, move for the most part from different starting points, and by unconnected roads. As products of the same generation they partake indeed of a common character, and unconsciously illustrate each other; but of the producers themselves, each group is solitary, gaining what advantage or disadvantage there may be in intellectual isolation. Art and poetry, philosophy and the religious life, and that other life of refined pleasure and action in the conspicuous places of the world, are each of them confined to its own circle of ideas, and those who prosecute either of them are generally little curious of the thoughts of others. There come, however, from time to time, eras of more favorable conditions, in which the thoughts of men draw nearer together than is their wont,

and the many interests of the intellectual world combine in one complete type of general culture. The fifteenth century in Italy is one of these happier eras, and what is sometimes said of the age of Pericles is true of that of Lorenzo:[8] it is an age productive in personalities, many-sided, centralized, complete. Here, artists and philosophers and those whom the action of the world has elevated and made keen, do not live in isolation, but breathe a common air, and catch light and heat from each other's thoughts. There is a spirit of general elevation and enlightenment in which all alike communicate. The unity of this spirit gives unity to all the various products of the Renaissance; and it is to this intimate alliance with mind, this participation in the best thoughts which that age produced, that the art of Italy in the fifteenth century owes much of its grave dignity and influence.

I have added an essay on Winckelmann,[9] as not incongruous with the studies which precede it, because Winckelmann, coming in the eighteenth century, really belongs in spirit to an earlier age. By his enthusiasm for the things of the intellect and the imagination for their own sake, by his Hellenism, his lifelong struggle to attain to the Greek spirit, he is in sympathy with the humanists of a previous century. He is the last fruit of the Renaissance, and explains in a striking way its motive and tendencies.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Matthew Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1864).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), Italian philosopher and classical scholar, subject of an essay by Pater that was included in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance.* "La Gioconda": another name for Leonardo da Vinci's painting the *Mona Lisa* (1503–06; see p. 716). "The hills of Carrara": marble quarries in Italy, particularly associated with Michelangelo (1475–1564).Return to reference 2

- Note 3: To confine themselves to knowing beautiful things intimately, and to sustain themselves by these, as sensitive amateurs and accomplished humanists do (French). In 1980 the editor Donald J. Hill discovered that this quotation is *by* the French man of letters Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804–1869) rather than about him; therefore, Hill conjectures that "a recent critic" ought to be "a recent critique."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: From Blake's annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds* (1778). The "genius" was the German artist Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Wordsworth's ode is actually titled "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood"; both poems were published in 1807.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: French poet and critic (ca. 1522–1560), subject of another essay in *Studies of the History of the Renaissance*.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Asceticism (Greek).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Lorenzo de Medici (1449–1492, also known as Lorenzo the Magnificent), ruler of Florence and patron of the arts. Pericles (ca. 495–429 B.C.E.), a statesman who led Athens during its period of greatest political and cultural dominance.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), German classicist.Return to reference 9

[“LA GIOCONDA”][1]

“La Gioconda” is, in the truest sense, Leonardo’s masterpiece, the revealing instance of his mode of thought and work. In suggestiveness, only the “Melancholia” of Dürer is comparable to it; and no crude symbolism disturbs the effect of its subdued and graceful mystery. We all know the face and hands of the figure, set in its marble chair, in that circle of fantastic rocks, as in some faint light under sea. Perhaps of all ancient pictures time has chilled it least. As often happens with works in which invention seems to reach its limit, there is an element in it given to, not invented by, the master. In that inestimable folio of drawings, once in the possession of Vasari, were certain designs by Verrocchio,[2] faces of such impressive beauty that Leonardo in his boyhood copied them many times. It is hard not to connect with these designs of the elder, by-past master, as with its germinal principle, the unfathomable smile, always with a touch of something sinister in it, which plays over all Leonardo’s work. Besides, the picture is a portrait. From childhood we see this image defining itself on the fabric of his dreams, and but for express historical testimony, we might fancy that this was but his ideal lady, embodied and beheld at last. What was the relationship of a living Florentine to this creature of his thought? By what strange affinities had the dream and the person grown up thus apart, and yet so closely together? Present from the first incorporeally in Leonardo’s brain, dimly traced in the designs of Verrocchio, she is found present at last in Il Giocondo’s house. That there is much of mere portraiture in the picture is attested by the legend that by artificial means, the presence of mimes[3] and flute-players, that subtle expression was protracted on the face. Again, was it in four years and by renewed labor never really completed, or in four months and as by stroke of magic, that the image was projected?

The presence that rose thus so strangely beside the waters, is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years men had come to desire. Hers is the head upon which all “the ends of the world are come,” [4] and the eyelids are a little weary. It is a beauty wrought out

from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions. Set it for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its maladies has passed! All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and molded there, in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the mysticism of the Middle Age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias.[5] She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants, and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy,[6] and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has molded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands. The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one; and modern philosophy has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by, and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life. Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Or *Mona Lisa,* the famous painting by Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) that now hangs in the Louvre in Paris. The sitter for the portrait may have been Lisa, the third wife of the Florentine Francesco del Giocondo (to whom Pater refers as "Il Giocondo")—hence her title, La Gioconda. *Mona* (more correctly *Monna*) *Lisa* means "Madonna Lisa" or "My Lady Lisa." This selection is drawn from the essay on da Vinci.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Andrea del Verrocchio (1435–1488), Florentine painter and sculptor. Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574), author of *Lives of the Most Excellent Italian Painters* (1550).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Mimics or clowns.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: 1 Corinthians 10:11.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A powerful Italian family during the Renaissance, notorious for scandalous conduct.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Helen’s father was Zeus (who approached Leda in the form of a swan).Return to reference 6

Conclusion[7]

Λέγει πον Ἡράκλειτος ὅτι πάντα χωρεῖ καὶ οὐδὲν μένει[8]

To regard all things and principles of things as inconstant modes or fashions has more and more become the tendency of modern thought. Let us begin with that which is without—our physical life. Fix upon it in one of its more exquisite intervals, the moment, for instance, of delicious recoil from the flood of water in summer heat. What is the whole physical life in that moment but a combination of natural elements to which science gives their names? But those elements, phosphorus and lime and delicate fibers, are present not in the human body alone: we detect them in places most remote from it. Our physical life is a perpetual motion of them—the passage of the blood, the waste and repairing of the lenses of the eye, the modification of the tissues of the brain under every ray of light and sound—processes which science reduces to simpler and more elementary forces. Like the elements of which we are composed, the action of these forces extends beyond us: it rusts iron and ripens corn.[9] Far out on every side of us those elements are broadcast, driven in many currents; and birth and gesture and death and the springing of violets from the grave are but a few out of ten thousand resultant combinations. That clear, perpetual outline of face and limb is but an image of ours, under which we group them—a design in a web, the actual threads of which pass out beyond it. This at least of flamelike our life has, that it is but the concurrence, renewed from moment to moment, of forces parting sooner or later on their ways.

Or, if we begin with the inward world of thought and feeling, the whirlpool is still more rapid, the flame more eager and devouring. There it is no longer the gradual darkening of the eye, the gradual fading of colour from the wall—movements of the shore-side, where the water flows down indeed, though in apparent rest—but the race of the midstream, a drift of momentary acts of sight and passion and thought. At first sight experience seems to bury us under a flood of external objects, pressing upon us with a sharp and importunate

reality, calling us out of ourselves in a thousand forms of action. But when reflection begins to play upon those objects they are dissipated under its influence; the cohesive force seems suspended like some trick of magic; each object is loosed into a group of impressions—colour, odour, texture—in the mind of the observer. And if we continue to dwell in thought on this world, not of objects in the solidity with which language invests them, but of impressions, unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them, it contracts still further: the whole scope of observation is dwarfed into the narrow chamber of the individual mind. Experience, already reduced to a group of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world. Analysis goes a step farther still, and assures us that those impressions of the individual mind to which, for each one of us, experience dwindles down, are in perpetual flight; that each of them is limited by time, and that as time is infinitely divisible, each of them is infinitely divisible also; all that is actual in it being a single moment, gone while we try to apprehend it, of which it may ever be more truly said that it has ceased to be than that it is. To such a tremulous wisp constantly reforming itself on the stream, to a single sharp impression, with a sense in it, a relic more or less fleeting, of such moments gone by, what is real in our life fines itself down. It is with this movement, with the passage and dissolution of impressions, images, sensations, that analysis leaves off—that continual vanishing away, that strange, perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves.

Philosophiren, says Novalis, *ist dephlegmatisiren, vivificiren.*[1] The service of philosophy, of speculative culture, towards the human spirit is to rouse, to startle it to a life of constant and eager observation. Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest; some

mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive to us—for that moment only. Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end. A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses? How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy?

To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. In a sense it might even be said that our failure is to form habits: for, after all, habit is relative to a stereotyped world, and meantime it is only the roughness of the eye that makes any two persons, things, situations, seem alike. While all melts under our feet, We may well grasp at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend. Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us, and in the very brilliancy of their gifts some tragic dividing of forces on their ways, is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening. With this sense of the splendour of our experience and of its awful[2] brevity, gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch, we shall hardly have time to make theories about the things we see and touch. What we have to do is to be forever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions, never acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy of Comte, or of Hegel,[3] or of our own. Philosophical theories or ideas, as points of view, instruments of criticism, may help us to gather up what might otherwise pass unregarded by us. "Philosophy is the microscope of thought."[4] The theory or idea or system which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience, in consideration of some interest into which we cannot enter, or some abstract theory we have not identified with ourselves, or of what is only conventional, has no real claim upon us.

One of the most beautiful passages of Rousseau[5] is that in the sixth book of the *Confessions,* where he describes the awakening in him of the literary sense. An undefinable taint of death had clung always about him, and now in early manhood he believed himself smitten by mortal disease. He asked himself how he might make as much as possible of the interval that remained; and he was not biased by anything in his previous life when he decided that it must be by intellectual excitement, which he found just then in the clear, fresh writings of Voltaire.[6] Well! we are all *condamnés* as Victor Hugo[7] says: we are all under sentence of death but with a sort of indefinite reprieve—*les hommes sont tous condamnés à mort avec des sursis indéfinis*: we have an interval, and then our place knows us no more. Some spend this interval in listlessness, some in high passions, the wisest, at least among "the children of this world,"[8] in art and song. For our one chance lies in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time. Great passions may give us this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, the various forms of enthusiastic activity, disinterested or otherwise, which come naturally to many of us. Only be sure it is passion—that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness. Of such wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for its own sake, has most. For art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake.

1868 1873

Endnotes

- Note 7: This brief "Conclusion" was omitted in the second edition of this book, as I conceived it might possibly mislead some of those young men into whose hands it might fall. On the whole, I have thought it best to reprint it here, with some slight changes which bring it closer to my original meaning. I have dealt more fully in *Marius the Epicurean* with the thoughts

suggested by it [*Pater's note to the 3rd edition, 1888*].Return to reference 7

- Note 8: Heraclitus says, "All things give way; nothing remaineth" [*Pater's translation*]. The Greek philosopher was active ca. 500 B.C.E.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Grain.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: To philosophize is to cast off inertia, to make oneself alive (German). "Novalis" was the pseudonym of Friedrich von Hardenberg (1772–1801), German Romantic writer.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Awe-inspiring.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Georg W. F. Hegel (1770–1831), German idealistic philosopher. Auguste Comte (1798–1857), French founder of positivism.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The quotation is taken from the novel *Les Misérables* (1862) by the French writer Victor Hugo (1802–1885).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), Swiss-born French political theorist and philosopher; his *Confessions* were published in 1781 and 1788.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The pen name of the French author and philosopher François-Marie Arouet (1694–1778).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The quotation is taken from his work *Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné* (*The Last Day of a Condemned Man,* 1832).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Luke 16:8.Return to reference 8

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS
1844–1889

It has been said that the most important date in Gerard Manley Hopkins's career was 1918, twenty-nine years after his death, for it was then that the first publication of his poems made them accessible to the world of readers. During his lifetime these remarkable poems, most of them celebrating the wonders of God's creation, had been known only to a small circle of friends, including his literary executor, the poet Robert Bridges, who waited until 1918 before releasing them to a publisher. Partly because his work was first made public in a twentieth-century volume, but especially because of his striking experiments in meter and diction, Hopkins was widely hailed as a pioneering figure of "modern" literature, miraculously unconnected with his fellow Victorian poets (who during the 1920s and 1930s were largely out of fashion among critical readers). And this way of classifying and evaluating his writings has long persisted. In 1936 a substantial selection of his poems led off *The Faber Book of Modern Verse,* one of the most influential anthologies of the century, featuring poets such as W. H. Auden, Dylan Thomas, and T. S. Eliot (the only one whose selections occupy more pages than those allotted to Hopkins). And the first four editions of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (1962–79) grouped Hopkins with these twentieth-century poets. To reclassify him is not to repudiate his earlier reputation as a modern but rather to suggest that his work can be better understood and

appreciated if it is restored to the Victorian world out of which it developed.

Hopkins was born near London into a large and cultivated family in comfortable circumstances. After a brilliant career at Highgate School, he entered Oxford in 1863, where he was exposed to a variety of Victorian ways of thinking, both secular and religious. Among the influential leaders at Oxford was Matthew Arnold, professor of poetry; but more important for Hopkins was his tutor, Walter Pater, an aesthetician whose emphasis on the intense apprehension of sensuous beauty struck a responsive chord in Hopkins. At Oxford he was also exposed to the Broad Church theology of one of the tutors at his college (Balliol), Benjamin Jowett. But Hopkins became increasingly attracted first to the High Church movement represented at Oxford by Edward Pusey, and then to Roman Catholicism. Profoundly influenced by John Henry Newman's conversion to Rome and by subsequent conversations with Newman, Hopkins entered the Roman Catholic Church in 1866. The estrangement from his family that resulted from his conversion was very painful for him; his parents' letters to him were so "terrible" (he reported to Newman) that he could not bear to "read them twice." And this alienation was heightened by his decision not only to become a Roman Catholic but to become a priest and, in particular, a Jesuit priest, for many Victorian Protestants regarded the Jesuit order with a special distrust. For the rest of his life, Hopkins served as a priest and teacher in various places, among them Oxford, Liverpool, and Lancashire. In 1884 he was appointed professor of classics at University College in Dublin.

At school and at Oxford in the early 1860s, Hopkins had written poems in the vein of John Keats. He burned most of these early writings after his conversion (although drafts survive), for he believed that his vocation must require renouncing such personal satisfactions as the writing of poems. Only after his superiors in the church encouraged him to do so did he resume writing poetry. Yet during the seven years of silence, as his letters show, he had been thinking about experimenting with what he called a "new rhythm."

The result, in 1876, was his rhapsodic lyric-narrative, "The Wreck of the Deutschland," a long ode about the wreck of a ship in which five Franciscan nuns were drowned. The style of the poem was so distinctive that the editor of the Jesuit magazine to which he had submitted it "dared not print it," as Hopkins reported. During the remaining fourteen years of his life, Hopkins wrote poems but seldom submitted them for publication, partly because he was convinced that poetic fame was incompatible with his religious vocation but also because of a fear that readers would be discouraged by the eccentricity of his work.

Hopkins's sense of his own uniqueness is in accord with the larger philosophy that informs his poetry. Drawing on the theology of Duns Scotus, a medieval philosopher, he felt that everything in the universe was characterized by what he called *inscape,* the distinctive design that constitutes individual identity. This identity is not static but dynamic. Each being in the universe "selves," that is, enacts its identity. And the human being, the most highly selved, the most individually distinctive being in the universe, recognizes the inscape of other beings in an act that Hopkins calls *instress,* the apprehension of an object in an intense thrust of energy toward it that enables one to realize its specific distinctiveness. Ultimately, the instress of inscape leads one to Christ, for the individual identity of any object is the stamp of divine creation on it. In the act of instress, therefore, the human being becomes a celebrant of the divine, at once recognizing God's creation and enacting his or her own God-given identity within it.

Poetry for Hopkins enacts this celebration. It is instress, and it realizes the inscape of its subject in its own distinctive design. Hopkins wrote, "But as air, melody, is what strikes me most of all in music and design in painting, so design, pattern or what I am in the habit of calling 'inscape' is what I above all aim at in poetry." To create inscape, Hopkins seeks to give each poem a unique design that captures the initial inspiration when he is "caught" by his subject. Many of the characteristics of Hopkins's style—his disruption of conventional syntax, his coining and compounding of words, his

use of ellipsis and repetition—can be understood as ways of representing the stress and action of the brain in moments of inspiration. He creates compounds to represent the unique interlocking of the characteristics of an object—"piece-bright," "dapple-dawn-drawn," "blue-bleak." He omits syntactical connections to fuse qualities more intensely—"the dearest freshness deep down things." He creates puns to suggest how God's creation rhymes and chimes in a divine patterning. He violates conventional syntactic order to represent the shape of mental experience. In the act of imaginative apprehension, a language particular to the moment generates itself.

Hopkins also uses a new rhythm to give each poem its distinctive design. In the metric system he created, which he called *sprung rhythm,* lines have a given number of stresses, but the number and placement of unstressed syllables is highly variable. Hopkins rarely marks all the intended stresses, only those that readers might not anticipate. To indicate stressed syllables, Hopkins often uses both the stress (´) and the "great stress" (˝). A curved line marks an "outride"—one or more syllables added to a foot but not counted in the scansion of the line; they indicate a stronger stress on the preceding syllable and a short pause after the outride. Here, for example, is the scansion for the first three lines of "The Windhover":

I caúght this mórning mórning's mínion, kíng-
dom of dáylight's daúphin, dapple-dawń-drawn Fálcon, in his
ríding Of the rólling level uńderneáth him steady aír, and
stríding

Hopkins argued that sprung rhythm was the natural rhythm of common speech and written prose, as well as of music. He found a model for it in Old English poetry and in nursery rhymes, but he claimed that it had not been used in English poetry since the Elizabethan age.

The density and difficulty that result from Hopkins's unconventional rhythm and syntax make his poetry seem modern, but his concern with the imagination's shaping of the natural world

puts him very much in the Romantic tradition; and his creation of a rough and difficult style, designed to capture the mind's own motion, resembles the style of Robert Browning. "A horrible thing has happened to me," Hopkins wrote in 1864, "I have begun to *doubt* Tennyson." He criticizes Tennyson for using the grand style as a smooth and habitual poetic speech. Like Algernon Charles Swinburne, Walter Pater, and Henry James as well as Browning, Hopkins displays a new mannerism, characteristic of the latter part of the nineteenth century, which paradoxically combines an elaborate aestheticism with a more complex representation of consciousness.

In Hopkins's early poetry his singular apprehension of the beauty of individual objects always brings him to an ecstatic illumination of the presence of God. But in his late poems, the so-called terrible sonnets, his distinctive individuality comes to isolate him from the God who made him thus. Hopkins wrote, "To me there is no resemblance: searching nature, I taste *self* but at one tankard, that of my own being." In the terrible sonnets Hopkins confronts the solipsism to which his own stress on individuality seems to lead him. Like the mad speakers of so many Victorian dramatic monologues, he cannot escape a world solely of his own imagining. Yet even these poems of despair, which simultaneously echo the bleaker side of the Romantic tradition and anticipate more modern attitudes, reflect a traditional religious vision: the dark night of the soul as described by the Spanish mystic Saint John of the Cross.

In his introduction to *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse,* Yeats calls Hopkins's poetry "a last development of poetical diction." Yeats's remark indicates the anomaly that Hopkins's work poses. Perhaps it is only appropriate for a writer who stressed the uniqueness of inscape to strike us with the individuality of his achievement.

God’s Grandeur

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;[1]
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed.[2] Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man’s smudge and shares man’s smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for° all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

1877 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: Hopkins explained this image in a letter: “I mean foil in its sense of leaf or tinsel. . . . Shaken goldfoil gives off broad glares like sheet lightning and also, and this is true of nothing else, owing to its zigzag dints and creasings and network of small many cornered facets, a sort of fork lightning too.”Return to reference 1

- Note 2: That is, from the crushing of olives.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *despite*Return to reference °

The Starlight Night

Look at the stars! look, look up at the skies!
O look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air!
The bright boroughs, the circle-citadels there!
Down in dim woods the diamond delves![°] the elves'-eyes!
The grey lawns cold where gold, where quickgold;[1] lies!
Wind-beat whitebeam! airy abeles[°] set on a flare!
Flake-doves sent floating forth at a farmyard scare!—
Ah well! it is all a purchase, all is a prize.

Buy then! bid then!—What?—Prayer, patience, alms, vows.
Look, look: a May-mess,[2] like on orchard boughs!
Look! March-bloom, like on mealed-with-yellow sallows![3]
These are indeed the barn; withindoors house
The shocks. This piece-bright paling[4] shuts the spouse
Christ home, Christ and his mother and all his hallows.[°]

1877 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: Coined by analogy with quicksilver. The starlight night resembles the lawns below it, where the dew, reflecting the starlight, looks like gold.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A profusion of growing things such as May blossoms.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Willows, here with yellow spots like meal.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: This word choice connects the upright siding of the barn's walls to the planks (or "pales") of a fence. "Shocks": sheaves of grain.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *quarries*Return to reference °
- °: *white poplars*Return to reference °
- °: *saints*Return to reference °

As Kingfishers[1] Catch Fire

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
  As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
  Stones ring; like each tucked° string tells, each
  hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
  Deals out that being indoors° each one dwells;
  Selves[2]—goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells,
Crying *What I do is me: for that I came.*

I say more: the just man justices;[3]
  Keeps gráce: thát keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is—
  Chríst. For Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
  To the Father through the features of men's faces.

1877 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: Small, brightly colored birds.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Fulfills its individuality.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Acts in a just manner.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *plucked*Return to reference °
- °: *within*Return to reference °

Spring

Nothing is so beautiful as Spring—
When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush;
Thrush's eggs look little low heavens, and thrush
Through the echoing timber does so rinse and wring
The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing;
The glassy peartree leaves and blooms, they brush
The descending blue; that blue is all in a rush
With richness; the racing lambs too have fair their fling.

What is all this juice and all this joy?
A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning
In Eden garden.—Have, get, before it cloy,
Before it cloud, Christ, lord, and sour with sinning,
Innocent mind and Mayday in girl and boy,
Most, O maid's child,[1] thy choice and worthy the winning.

1877 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: Jesus, son of the Virgin Mary.Return to reference 1

The Windhover[1]

To Christ our Lord

I caught this morning morning's minion,[°] king-
dom of daylight's dauphin,[2] dapple-dawn-drawn
Falcon, in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and
striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein[3] of a
wimpling[°] wing
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend:
the hurl and gliding
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird,—the achieve of, the mastery of the
thing!

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride,
plume, here
Buckle![4] AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a
billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!
[°]

No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plough down
sillion[5]
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall[6] themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.

1877 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: Kestrel, a small falcon noted for hovering in the air.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A prince who is heir to the French throne.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Circled at the end of a rein.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The verb can be read as imperative or indicative. All three meanings are relevant: to prepare for action, to fasten together, to collapse.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The ridge between two furrows of a plowed field.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Break the surface of.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *darling*Return to reference °
- °: *rippling*Return to reference °
- °: *knight*Return to reference °

Pied[1] Beauty

Glory be to God for dappled things—
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded[2] cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls,[3] finches' wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plough;[4]
And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.°

All things counter,° original, spare,° strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.

1877 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: Of two or more colors in blotches, variegated.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Brownish orange in color with streaks of gray.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, freshly fallen chestnuts, bright as coals.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Divided into fields used as pastures ("fold"), lying fallow, or plowed for cultivation. The landscape thus appears like patches of different colors.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *equipment*Return to reference °

- °: *contrary* Return to reference °
- °: *rare*Return to reference °

Hurrahing in Harvest

Summer ends now; now, barbarous in beauty, the stooks[1] rise
Around; up above, what wind-walks! what lovely behaviour
Of silk-sack clouds! has wilder, wilful-wavier
Meal-drift moulded ever and melted across skies?

I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes,
Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our Saviour;
And, éyes, heárt, what looks, what lips yet gave you a
Rapturous love's greeting of realer, of rounder replies?

And the azurous hung hills are his world-wielding shoulder
Majestic—as a stallion stalwart, very-violet-sweet!—
These things, these things were here and but the beholder
Wanting; which two when they once meet,
The heart rears wings bold and bolder
And hurls for him, O half hurls earth for him off under his feet.

1877 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: Sheaves of grain.Return to reference 1

Binsey Poplars

felled 1879

My aspens dear, whose airy cages quelled,
Quelled or quenched in leaves the leaping sun,
All felled, felled, are all felled;
Of a fresh and following folded rank
Not spared, not one
That dandled a sandalled
Shadow that swam or sank
On meadow and river and wind-wandering
weed-winding bank.

O if we but knew what we do
When we delve° or hew—
Hack and rack° the growing green!
Since country is so tender
To touch, her being só slender,
That, like this sleek and seeing ball°
But a prick will make no eye at all,
Where we, even where we mean
To mend her we end her,
When we hew or delve:
After-comers cannot guess the beauty been.
Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve
Strokes of havoc únselve°
The sweet especial scene,
Rural scene, a rural scene,
Sweet especial rural scene.

1879 1918

Notes

- °: *dig*Return to reference °
- °: *torture*Return to reference °
- °: *the eye*Return to reference °
- °: *rob of self*Return to reference °

Duns Scotus's Oxford[1]

Towery city and branchy between towers;
Cuckoo-echoing, bell-swarmèd, lark-charmèd, rook-racked, river-rounded;
The dapple-eared lily below thee; that country and town did
Once encounter in, here coped and poisèd powers;

Thou hast a base and brickish skirt there, sours
That neighbour-nature thy grey beauty is grounded
Best in;[2] graceless growth, thou hast confounded
Rural rural keeping—folk, flocks, and flowers.

Yet ah! this air I gather and I release
He lived on; these weeds and waters, these walls are what
He haunted who of all men most sways my spirits to peace;

Of realty° the rarest-veinèd unraveller; a not
Rivalled insight, be rival Italy or Greece;
Who fired France for Mary without spot.[3]

1879 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: Duns Scotus, the medieval theologian, lectured at Oxford about 1301. His idea that individuality is the final perfection of any creature influenced Hopkins's conception of inscape. When Hopkins came on two of Scotus's commentaries in 1872, he wrote that he was immediately "flush with a new stroke of enthusiasm . . . when I took in any inscape of the sky or sea I thought of Scotus."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Hopkins contrasts the "here" of the "grey beauty" of the medieval city of Oxford, where country and town are both protected ("coped," as within a priest's cloak) and in equilibrium ("poisèd powers"), with the "there" of its new surburban "brickish skirt" (housing developments and industrial complexes that were built around the perimeter of the city in the 19th century).Return to reference 2

- Note 3: In Paris, Scotus was influential in defending the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception—that Mary's mother, St. Anne, conceived her daughter without sin.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *reality*Return to reference °

Felix Randal

Felix Randal the farrier,[°] O is he dead then? my duty
all ended,
Who have watched his mould of man, big-boned and hardy-handsome
Pining, pining, till time when reason rambled in it and some
Fatal four disorders, fleshed there, all contended?

Sickness broke him. Impatient, he cursed at first, but mended
Being anointed[1] and all; though a heavenlier heart began some
Months earlier, since I had our sweet reprieve and ransom[2]
Tendered to him. Ah well, God rest him all road ever[3] he offended!
This seeing the sick endears them to us, us too it endears.
My tongue had taught thee comfort, touch had quenched thy tears,
Thy tears that touched my heart, child, Felix, poor Felix Randal;
How far from then forethought of, all thy more boisterous years,
When thou at the random[4] grim forge, powerful amidst peers,
Didst fettle[°] for the great grey drayhorse his bright and
battering sandal!

1880 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: In Extreme Unction (the sacrament for the dying).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Holy Communion preceded by confession and absolution.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In whatever way.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Built with stones of irregular size and shape.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *blacksmith*Return to reference °
- °: *prepare*Return to reference °

Spring and Fall:[1]

to a young child

Márgarét, áre you gríeving
Over Goldengrove unleaving?
Leáves, líke the things of man, you
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?
Áh! ás the heart grows older
It will come to such sights colder
By and by, nor spare a sigh
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal[2] lie;
And yet you *will* weep and know why.
Now no matter, child, the name:
Sórrow's sprígs áre the same.
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed
What heart heard of, ghost° guessed:
It ís the blight man was born for,
It is Margaret you mourn for.

1880 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: This deceptively simple poem is deeply informed by Christian theology: according to Catholic doctrine, the fall of Adam and Eve brought into the world both mortality and the legacy of Original Sin for all human beings ("the blight man was born for").Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Coined by analogy with piecemeal. "Wanwood": pale or dim; the forest may be pale because of light-colored autumn leaves or dim because light is filtered through the leaves.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *spirit*Return to reference °

[Carrion Comfort][1]

Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast on thee,[2]
Not untwist—slack they may be—these last strands of man
In me ór, most weary, cry *I can no more.* I can;
Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be.

But ah, but O thou terrible, why wouldst thou rude on me
Thy wring-world right foot rock?[3] lay a lionlimb against me? scan
With darksome devouring eyes my bruisèd bones? and fan,
O in turns of tempest, me heaped there; me frantic to avoidthee and flee?

Why? That my chaff might fly; my grain lie,[4] sheer and clear.
Nay in all that toil, that coil,° since (seems) I kissed the rod,
Hand rather,[5] my heart lo! lapped strength, stole joy, wouldlaugh, chéer.
Cheer whom though? The Hero whose heaven-handlingflung me, fóot tród
Me? or me that fought him? O which one? is it each one? That night, that year
Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my God.

1885 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: This title was supplied by Hopkins's literary executor, the poet Robert Bridges (1844–1930). The poem is one of the "terrible sonnets," as are the three following poems.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The satisfaction of giving in to despair as a kind of "comfort" is implicitly likened to a vulture's satisfaction in feasting on dead flesh.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, why would you roughly rock me with your world-wringing right foot?Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Metaphors of winnowing, or removing the empty husks ("chaff") that are blown away from the valuable grain that remains, appear frequently in the Bible to represent the separation of virtue from wickedness. See, for example, Psalms 1:4, Luke 3:16–17.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: That is, the hand that wields the rod.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *tumultReturn to reference °*

No worst, there is none

No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring.
Comforter, where, where is your comforting?
Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?

My cries heave, herds-long;[1] huddle in a main, a chief-
woe, world-sorrow; on an age-old anvil wince and sing—
Then lull, then leave off. Fury had shrieked "No ling-
ering! Let me be fell:° force[2] I must be brief."
O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small
Durance° deal with that steep or deep. Here! creep,
Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all
Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.

1885 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: Like the succession of cries made by cattle that have been following one another in a long line.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Necessarily, inevitably.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *fierce, cruel*Return to reference °
- °: *endurance*Return to reference °

I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day

I wake and feel the fell° of dark, not day.
What hours, O what black hoürs we have spent
This night! what sights you, heart, saw; ways you went!
And more must, in yet longer light's delay.

With witness I speak this. But where I say
Hours I mean years, mean life. And my lament
Is cries countless, cries like dead letters[1] sent
To dearest him that lives alas! away.

I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree
Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me;
Bones built in me, flesh filled, blood brimmed the curse.

Selfyeast of spirit a dull dough sours. I see
The lost are like this, and their scourge to be
As I am mine, their sweating selves; but worse.

1885 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: Letters undelivered or returned to the sender by the post office.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *cruelty*Return to reference °

That Nature Is a Heraclitean Fire[1] and of the Comfort of the Resurrection

Cloud-puffball, torn tufts, tossed pillows | flaunt forth, then chevy°
on an air-
built thoroughfare: heaven-roysterers,° in gay-gangs | they
throng; they glitter in marches.
Down roughcast, down dazzling whitewash, | wherever an elm arches.
Shivelights and shadowtackle[2] in long | lashes lace, lance, and pair.
Delightfully the bright wind boisterous | ropes, wrestles, beats earth bare
Of yestertempest's creases; in pool and rut peel parches[3]
Squandering ooze to squeezed | dough, crust, dust; stanches, starches
Squadroned masks and manmarks[4] | treadmire toil there
Footfretted in it. Million-fuelèd, | nature's bonfire burns on.
But quench her bonniest, dearest | to her, her clearest-selvèd°
spark
Man, how fast his firedint | his mark on mind, is gone!
Both are in an unfathomable, all is in an enormous dark
Drowned. O pity and indig | nation! Manshape, that shone
Sheer off, disseveral,° a star, | death blots black out; nor mark
Is any of him at all so stark
But vastness blurs and time | beats level. Enough! the Resurrection,
A heart's-clarion! Away grief's gasping, | joyless days, dejection.
Across my foundering deck shone
A beacon, an eternal beam. | Flesh fade, and mortal trash
Fall to the residuary worm; | world's wildfire, leave but ash:
In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
I am all at once what Christ is, | since he was what I am, and
This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, | patch, matchwood,[5] immortal diamond,
Is immortal diamond.

1888 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: The Greek philosopher Heraclitus (flourished ca. 500 B.C.E.) taught that all things are in flux and that they ultimately return to the basic principle of fire.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Branches imagined as the shadows of a ship's rigging. "Shivelights": strips of light.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Ruts described as peeled places. "Parches" is a verb whose subject is *wind.*Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The marks that people have made on the earth by walking ("footfretted") on it.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Kindling. "Jack": ordinary man.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *race*Return to reference °
- °: *swaggerers*Return to reference °
- °: *most individual*Return to reference °
- °: *separate*Return to reference °

Thou art indeed just, Lord

Justus quidem tu es, Domine, si disputem tecum; verumtamen justaloquar ad te: Quare via impiorum prosperatur? &c.[1]

Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend
With thee; but, sir, so what I plead is just.
Why do sinners' ways prosper? and why must
Disappointment all I endeavour end?

Wert thou my enemy, O thou my friend,
How wouldst thou worse, I wonder, than thou dost
Defeat, thwart me? Oh, the sots and thralls of lust
Do in spare hours more thrive than I that spend,

Sir, life upon thy cause. See, banks and brakes°
Now, leavèd how thick! lacèd they are again
With fretty chervil,[2] look, and fresh wind shakes

Them; birds build—but not I build; no, but strain,
Time's eunuch, and not breed one work that wakes.
Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain.

1889 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?" (Jeremiah 12:1). The Latin was Hopkins's title.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A kind of herb, related to parsley.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *thickets*Return to reference °

MICHAEL FIELD
Katherine Harris Bradley (1846–1914)
Edith Emma Cooper (1862–1913)

Michael Field is the pseudonym adopted by Katherine Harris Bradley and her niece Edith Emma Cooper; together they published twenty-seven verse plays and eight volumes of poems. When Robert Browning wrote to Michael Field to praise a volume of plays, Cooper responded by comparing her collaborative relationship with Bradley to that of two famous Jacobean playwrights: "My Aunt and I work together after the fashion of Beaumont and Fletcher. She is my senior, by but fifteen years. She has lived with me, taught me, encouraged me and joined me to her poetic life." Bradley later begged him to maintain the disguise. The revelation of their secret, she pleaded, "would indeed be utter ruin to us," adding, "[w]e have many things to say that the world will not tolerate from a woman's lips."

Katherine Harris Bradley's father, a tobacco manufacturer, died when she was two; her mother died twenty years later. After her mother's death Bradley attended Newnham College, the newly established women's college at Cambridge, and the Collège de France in Paris. On her return home she joined John Ruskin's Guild of Saint George, a small utopian society. When Bradley wrote to Ruskin telling him that she had lost God and found a Skye terrier, he angrily ended their friendship. Shortly thereafter she began attending classes at Bristol University with her niece, Edith Emma

Cooper, whom she had adopted and raised after Edith's mother became ill. The two became lovers and began a life of writing and traveling together. Their first joint volume of poetry, *Long Ago* (1889), was inspired by Henry Wharton's 1885 edition of the writings of the ancient Greek poet Sappho, the first English translation to represent the object of Sappho's love poems as a woman. The preface to *Long Ago* explains their attempt to create poems elaborating on Sappho's fragments: "Devoutly as the fiery-bosomed Greek turned in her anguish to Aphrodite to accomplish her heart's desires, I have turned to the one woman who has dared to speak unfalteringly of the fearful mastery of love."

Bradley and Cooper knew most of the literary figures of the 1890s, including Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde, and William Butler Yeats, although their relationship to the decadent movement was complex. The eroticism of their early poetry, with its frank expression of love between women, seems consistent with the spirit of the decade, but Bradley and Cooper sharply criticized the work of the artist Aubrey Beardsley for its depravity and withdrew one of their poems from publication in *The Yellow Book* to protest its style (Beardsley was the journal's art editor). In 1906 they converted to Roman Catholicism when their beloved chow dog died, thus reversing the substitution of dog for God that Bradley had flippantly described to Ruskin three decades earlier. In 1911 Cooper was diagnosed with cancer. Also suffering from the same disease, which she kept a secret from Cooper to spare her pain, Bradley survived her niece by only eight months.

Maids, not to you my mind doth change

Ταῖσ κάλαισ ἴMMιν [το] νόηMα τ2Μον ού διάMειπτον.[1]

Maids, not to you my mind doth change;
Men I defy, allure, estrange,
Prostrate, make bond or free:
Soft as the stream beneath the plane°
To you I sing my love's refrain;
Between us is no thought of pain,
Peril, satiety.

Soon doth a lover's patience tire,
But ye to manifold desire
Can yield response, ye know
When for long, museful days I pine,
The presage at my heart divine;
To you I never breathe a sign
Of inward want or woe.

When injuries my spirit bruise,
Allaying virtue ye infuse
With unobtrusive skill:
And if care frets ye come to me
As fresh as nymph from stream or tree,
And with your soft vitality
My weary bosom fill.

1889

Endnotes

- Note 1: A fragment from the works of the Greek poet Sappho (born ca. 612 B.C.E.); the epigraph is translated in the first line of the poem.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *tree*Return to reference °

La Gioconda[1]

LEONARDO DA VINCI[2]

The Louvre[3]

Historic, side-long, implicating eyes;
A smile of velvet's lustre on the cheek;
Calm lips the smile leads upward; hand that lies
Glowing and soft, the patience in its rest
Of cruelty that waits and doth not seek
For prey; a dusky forehead and a breast
Where twilight touches ripeness amorously:
Behind her, crystal rocks, a sea and skies
Of evanescent blue on cloud and creek;
Landscape that shines suppressive of its zest
For those vicissitudes by which men die.

1892

Endnotes

- Note 1: Italian name for the *Mona Lisa* (1503), oil painting.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Italian Renaissance painter and polymath (1452–1519).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Art museum in Paris.Return to reference 3

A Pen-Drawing of Leda[1]

SODOMA[2]

The Grand Duke's Palace at Weimar[3]

'Tis Leda lovely, wild and free,
  Drawing her gracious Swan down through the grass to see
  Certain round eggs without a speck:
One hand plunged in the reeds and one dinting the downy neck,
  Although his hectoring bill
  Gapes toward her tresses,
She draws the fondled creature to her will.

  She joys to bend in the live light
Her glistening body toward her love, how much more bright!
  Though on her breast the sunshine lies
And spreads its affluence on the wide curves of her waist and thighs,
  To her meek, smitten gaze
  Where her hand presses
The Swan's white neck sink Heaven's concentred rays.

1892

Endnotes

- Note 1: According to Greek mythology, Leda was raped by Zeus, who came to her in the form of a swan.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Although the drawing to which this poem refers is now attributed to da Vinci, at the time of its composition, it was credited to Il Sodoma, or Giovanni Antonio Bazzi (1477–1549), another Italian Renaissance painter.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A palace in Germany, home to a collection of art.Return to reference 3

The Sleeping Venus

GIORGIONE[1]

The Dresden Gallery[2]

Here is Venus by our homes
And resting on the verdant swell
Of a soft country flanked with mountain domes:
She has left her archèd shell,
Has left the barren wave that foams,
Amid earth's fruitful tilths to dwell.
Nobly lighted while she sleeps
As sward-lands or the corn-field sweeps,
Pure as are the things that man
Needs for life and using can
Never violate nor spot—
Thus she slumbers in no grot,
But on open ground,
With the great hill-sides around.

And her body has the curves,
The same extensive smoothness seen
In yonder breadths of pasture, in the swerves
Of the grassy mountain-green
That for her propping pillow serves:
There is a sympathy between
Her and Earth of largest reach,
For the sex that forms them each
Is a bond, a holiness,
That unconsciously must bless
And unite them, as they lie
Shameless underneath the sky

A long, opal cloud
Doth in noontide haze enshroud.

O’er her head her right arm bends;
And from the elbow raised aloft
Down to the crossing knees a line descends
Unimpeachable and soft
As the adjacent slope that ends
In chequered plain of hedge and croft.
Circular as lovely knolls,
Up to which a landscape rolls
With desirous sway, each breast
Rises from the level chest,
One in contour, one in round—
Either exquisite, low mound
Firm in shape and given
To the August warmth of heaven.

With bold freedom of incline,
With an uttermost repose,
From hip to herbage-cushioned foot the line
Of her left leg stretching shows
Against the turf direct and fine,
Dissimilar in grace to those
Little bays that in and out
By the ankle wind about;
Or that shallow bend, the right
Curled-up knee has brought to sight
Underneath its bossy rise,
Where the loveliest shadow lies!
Charmed umbrage rests
On her neck and by her breasts.

Her left arm remains beside
The plastic body’s lower heaves,
Controlled by them, as when a river-side

With its sandy margin weaves
Deflections in a lenient tide;
Her hand the thigh's tense surface leaves,
  Falling inward. Not even sleep
  Dare invalidate the deep,
  Universal pleasure sex
  Must unto itself annex—
  Even the stillest sleep; at peace,
  More profound with rest's increase,
  She enjoys the good
  Of delicious womanhood.

Cheek and eyebrow touch the fold
Of the raised arm that frames her hair,
Her braided hair in colour like to old
Copper glinting here and there:
While through her skin of olive-gold
The scarce carnations mount and share
  Faultlessly the oval space
  Of her temperate, grave face.
  Eyelids underneath the day
  Wrinkle as full buds that stay,
  Through the tranquil, summer hours,
  Closed although they might be flowers;
  The red lips shut in
  Gracious secrets that begin.

On white drapery she sleeps,
That fold by fold is stained with shade;
Her mantle's ruddy pomegranate in heaps
For a cushion she has laid
Beneath her; and the glow that steeps
Its grain of richer depth is made
  By an overswelling bank,
  Tufted with dun° grasses rank.
  From this hillock's outer heaves

One small bush defines its leaves
Broadly on the sober blue
The pale cloud-bank rises to,
Whilst it sinks in bland
Sunshine on the distant land.

Near her resting-place are spread,
In deep or greener-lighted brown,
Wolds, that half-withered by the heat o'erhead,
Press up to a little town
Of castle, archway; roof and shed,
Then slope in grave continuance down:
On their border, in a group,
Trees of brooding foliage droop
Sidelong; and a single tree
Springs with bright simplicity,
Central from the sunlit plain.
Of a blue no flowers attain,
On the fair, vague sky
Adamantine° summits lie.

And her resting is so strong
That while we gaze it seems as though
She had lain thus the solemn glebes[3] among
In the ages far ago
And would continue, till the long,
Last evening of Earth's summer glow
In communion with the sweet
Life that ripens at her feet:
We can never fear that she
From Italian fields will flee,
For she does not come from far,
She is of the things that are;
And she will not pass
While the sun strikes on the grass.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Italian painter of the High Renaissance.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Important museum in Dresden, GermanyReturn to reference 2
- Note 3: Land belonging to a parish church.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *brownish, dark gray*Return to reference °
- °: *hard and shiny*Return to reference °

[A girl]

A girl,
Her soul a deep-wave pearl
Dim, lucent of all lovely mysteries;
A face flowered for heart's ease,
A brow's grace soft as seas
Seen through faint forest-trees:
A mouth, the lips apart,
Like aspen-leaflets trembling in the breeze
From her tempestuous heart.
Such: and our souls so knit,
I leave a page half-writ—
The work begun
Will be to heaven's conception done,
If she come to it.

1893

Unbosoming

The love that breeds
In my heart for thee!
As the iris is full, brimful of seeds,
And all that it flowered for among the reeds
Is packed in a thousand vermilion-beads
That push, and riot, and squeeze, and clip,°
Till they burst the sides of the silver scrip,°
And at last we see
What the bloom, with its tremulous, bowery fold
Of zephyr-petal at heart did hold:
So my breast is rent
With the burthen and strain of its great content;
For the summer of fragrance and sighs is dead,
The harvest-secret is burning red,
And I would give thee, after my kind,
The final issues of heart and mind.

1893

Notes

- °: *clutch*Return to reference °
- °: *purse*Return to reference °

[It was deep April, and the morn]

It was deep April, and the morn
  Shakspere was born;[1]
The world was on us, pressing sore;
My Love and I took hands and swore,
  Against the world, to be
Poets and lovers evermore,
To laugh and dream on Lethe's[2] shore,
To sing to Charon[3] in his boat,
Heartening the timid souls afloat;
Of judgment never to take heed,
But to those fast-locked souls to speed,
Who never from Apollo[4] fled,
Who spent no hour among the dead;
  Continually
  With them to dwell,
Indifferent to heaven and hell.

1893

Endnotes

- Note 1: Shakespeare's birthday is traditionally ascribed to April 23, 1564.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The river of forgetfulness in the underworld (a reference, like those that follow, to classical mythology).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The ferryman who rows the dead across the river Styx to the underworld.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: God of poetry and of the sun.Return to reference 4

Tiger-Lilies

Lilies, are you come!
I quail before you as your buds upswell;
It is the miracle
Of fire and sculpture in your brazen urns
That strikes me dumb,—
Fire of midsummer that burns,
And as it passes,
Flinging rich sparkles on its own clear blare,
Wreathes with the wreathing tongues and rays,
Great tiger-lilies, of your deep-cleft masses!
It is the wonder
I am laid under
By the firm heaves
And overtumbling edges of your liberal leaves.

1893

To Christina Rossetti

Lady, we would behold thee moving bright
As Beatrice or Matilda[1] mid the trees,
Alas! thy moan was as a moan for ease
And passage through cool shadows to the night:
Fleeing from love, hadst thou not poet's right
To slip into the universe? The seas
Are fathomless to rivers drowned in these,
And sorrow is secure in leafy light.
Ah, had this secret touched thee, in a tomb
Thou hadst not buried thy enchanting self,
As happy Syrinx[2] murmuring with the wind,
Or Daphne,[3] thrilled through all her mystic bloom,
From safe recess as genius[4] or as elf,
Thou hadst breathed joy in earth and in thy kind.

1896

Endnotes

- Note 1: An idealized virgin in Dante's *Purgatorio* (28.30), who explains to the poet that he is in the Garden of Eden. Beatrice, Dante's idealized beloved, appears to the poet in the Earthly Paradise at the top of the mountain of Purgatory.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A nymph who, when pursued by Pan, prayed to the river nymphs to save her; she was transformed into reeds, from which Pan made his flute (in Greek, *syrinx* literally means "Panpipe").Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A nymph who, to escape Apollo's pursuit, was transformed into a laurel tree (the literal meaning of *daphnë* in

Greek).Return to reference 3

- Note 4: The spirit of a place.Return to reference 4

Nests in Elms

The rooks are cawing up and down the trees!
Among their nests they caw. O sound I treasure,
Ripe as old music is, the summer's measure,
Sleep at her gossip, sylvan mysteries,
With prate and clamour to give zest of these—
In rune I trace the ancient law of pleasure,
Of love, of all the busy-ness of leisure,
With dream on dream of never-thwarted ease.
O homely birds, whose cry is harbinger
Of nothing sad, who know not anything
Of sea-birds' loneliness, of Procne's[1] strife,
Rock round me when I die! So sweet it were
To die by open doors, with you on wing
Humming the deep security of life.

1908

Endnotes

- Note 1: In Greek mythology Procne's husband, King Tereus, raped her sister, Philomela. Tereus then ripped out Philomela's tongue to keep her from revealing the crime, but she wove the story into a tapestry. In revenge Procne killed their son and served him to Tereus in a stew. When the sisters fled Tereus, all three were changed into birds: Tereus, into a hoopoe; Procne, a nightingale; and Philomela, a swallow.Return to reference 1

Eros[1]

O Eros of the mountains, of the earth,
One thing I know of thee that thou art old,
Far, sovereign, lonesome tyrant of the dearth
Of chaos, ruler of the primal cold!
None gave thee nurture: chaos' icy rings
Pressed on thy plenitude. O fostering power,
Thine the first voice, first warmth, first golden wings,
First blowing zephyr, earliest opened flower,
Thine the first smile of Time: thou hast no mate,
Thou art alone forever, giving all:
After thine image, Love, thou did'st create
Man to be poor, man to be prodigal;
And thus, O awful° god, he is endued
With the raw hungers of thy solitude.

1908

Endnotes

- Note 1: Love (Greek); in Greek mythology the god of love.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *awe-inspiring*Return to reference °

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON
1850–1894

Robert Louis (originally Lewis) Balfour Stevenson was born in Edinburgh on November 13, 1850, the only child of Margaret Balfour and Thomas Stevenson, a well-known marine engineer and designer of lighthouses. His family was part of the respectable Scottish middle classes, a membership that would both benefit Stevenson—although there were difficult stretches in his relationship with his father, he generally did not have to worry about money—and leave him with a restlessness for adventure and excitement. Driven at the same time by a quest for a climate that would ease his chronically diseased lungs, Stevenson traveled more broadly than any other prominent Victorian writer. And yet it could be argued that although he was constantly on the move in far-flung lands, Stevenson returned again and again in his creative fiction, explicitly or implicitly, to the tensions of his own personal and national heritage—to the pronounced conflicts of his upbringing and of Scotland's somber, religiously oppressive society.

An awkward sensitive boy, Stevenson was subjected to the disciplinary strictures of his stern Presbyterian father and to the more affectionate, although also deeply devout, care of his mother and his nurse. Plagued by night terrors and bouts of sickness, the young Stevenson seemed "in body . . . assuredly badly set up," as a schoolmate said in later years; "his limbs were long, lean, and spidery, and his chest flat, so as almost to suggest some

malnutrition." This constitutional weakness was to afflict Stevenson throughout his life, and he enjoyed only short periods of reasonable health. As a student at Edinburgh University, Stevenson soon began to avoid the engineering classes that would have enabled him to follow in his father's footsteps, and embarked instead on a course of reading—"an extensive and highly rational system of truancy," as he called it—to learn how to become a writer. In time, as a compromise to placate his father, he switched to the study of law; although he never practiced as a lawyer, he did pass the Scottish bar examination in 1875. But Stevenson's interests clearly lay elsewhere; in this period he began reading scandalous French poetry and hanging around brothels, where the prostitutes nicknamed him "Velvet Jacket." His appearance and wit attracted attention: describing their first encounter in 1873, Stevenson's friend the folklorist and writer Andrew Lang later recalled that he "wore a wide blue cloak, with a grace that hovered between that of an Italian poet and an early pirate. It was impossible not to discover, in a short conversation, that he was very clever."

At the age of twenty-two, Stevenson further distanced himself from his father by confessing that he had turned both socialist and agnostic; he subsequently began to spend increasingly longer periods in France, partly because of respiratory troubles but also to be in the company of painters and writers. Back in Britain he developed important and useful friendships with artistic and literary figures, including Sidney Colvin, a professor of art, and the poet and editor W. E. Henley; with their support Stevenson started to publish essays and books of travel writing. As if to complete his breach with bourgeois Scottish respectability, Stevenson then fell in love with Fanny Osbourne, an American woman ten years his senior, who was estranged from her husband but not yet divorced.

In 1879 Stevenson's global wanderings began in earnest, starting with a trip to California to marry the newly divorced Fanny. Despite constant travel and recurrent illness, Stevenson found the time and energy to write. *Treasure Island*, begun as an amusement for his stepson, was his first popular success: serialized in 1881 and

published in book form in 1883, the story of the cabin boy Jim Hawkins's adventures includes a covert portrait of Stevenson's one-legged friend Henley in the figure of the pirate Long John Silver. Soon thereafter he published another children's classic: *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885), a collection of poems dedicated to his former nurse. In the years to come, Stevenson worked in numerous genres, including short fiction, swashbuckling romances, historical adventures (*Kidnapped*, 1886, a story set in Scotland just after the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, and its sequel, *Catriona*, 1893), and more gothic undertakings, such as the bleak and brooding novel *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889).

The work that first established Stevenson's critical reputation, however, was a horror story that prefigured *The Master of Ballantrae*'s fascination with the darker side of human nature and reflected his long-standing interest in the idea of a double life: *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, written in 1885 and published the following year. The novella rapidly became a best seller in both Britain and America, and like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* of 1818 (to which *Jekyll and Hyde* pays homage at various moments) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), the story has enjoyed a continuous and lively presence in popular culture up to the present day. Yet our familiarity with the outline of the tale may not prepare us for the psychological and ethical complexity of the original. Certainly the novelist's friends found *Jekyll and Hyde* genuinely unnerving: the writer and historian J. A. Symonds wrote to Stevenson that the story "has left such a deeply painful impression on my heart that I do not know how I am ever to turn to it again," while Lang commented that "we would welcome a spectre, a ghoul, or even a vampire, rather than meet Mr. Edward Hyde." For some, many aspects of the novella have seemed markedly Scottish in flavor: the novelist G. K. Chesterton insisted that its London is really Edinburgh, its Englishmen actually Scotsmen—"No modern English lawyer," he protested of the character Mr. Utterson, "ever read a book of dry divinity in the evening, merely because it was Sunday." Nevertheless, the distinctive tone and theme of *Jekyll and Hyde* have

led many critics to characterize it—often together with another work that shares its preoccupation with the divided self, Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891)—as an expression of quintessentially fin de siècle anxieties.

From 1888 onward the Stevensons embarked on a series of journeys in the South Seas, once again in the hope that the climate would benefit the writer's health. They eventually settled in Samoa, where Stevenson became a favorite with the locals (who called him Tusitala, or "teller of tales") before he died of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1894. At the time of his death, Stevenson was only forty-four years old and still furiously at work, this time on a historical novel titled *Weir of Hermiston.*

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

Story of the Door

Mr. Utterson the lawyer was a man of a rugged countenance, that was never lighted by a smile; cold, scanty and embarrassed in discourse; backward in sentiment; lean, long, dusty, dreary and yet somehow lovable. At friendly meetings, and when the wine was to his taste, something eminently human beaconed from his eye; something indeed which never found its way into his talk, but which spoke not only in these silent symbols of the after-dinner face, but more often and loudly in the acts of his life. He was austere with himself; drank gin when he was alone, to mortify a taste for vintages; and though he enjoyed the theatre, had not crossed the doors of one for twenty years. But he had an approved[1] tolerance for others; sometimes wondering, almost with envy, at the high pressure of spirits involved in their misdeeds; and in any extremity inclined to help rather than to reprove. "I incline to Cain's heresy,"[2] he used to say quaintly: "I let my brother go to the devil in his own way." In this character, it was frequently his fortune to be the last reputable acquaintance and the last good influence in the lives of down-going men. And to such as these, so long as they came about his chambers, he never marked a shade of change in his demeanour.

No doubt the feat was easy to Mr. Utterson; for he was undemonstrative at the best, and even his friendship seemed to be founded in a similar catholicity[3] of good-nature. It is the mark of a modest man to accept his friendly circle ready-made from the hands of opportunity; and that was the lawyer's way. His friends were those of his own blood or those whom he had known the longest; his affections, like ivy, were the growth of time, they implied no aptness in the object. Hence, no doubt, the bond that united him to Mr. Richard Enfield, his distant kinsman, the well-known man about town. It was a nut to crack for many, what these two could see in each other, or what subject they could find in common. It was reported by those who encountered them in their Sunday walks, that they said nothing, looked singularly dull, and would hail with obvious relief the appearance of a friend. For all that, the two men put the

greatest store by these excursions, counted them the chief jewel of each week, and not only set aside occasions of pleasure, but even resisted the calls of business, that they might enjoy them uninterrupted.

It chanced on one of these rambles that their way led them down a by-street in a busy quarter of London. The street was small and what is called quiet, but it drove a thriving trade on the week-days. The inhabitants were all doing well, it seemed, and all emulously hoping to do better still, and laying out the surplus of their gains in coquetry;[4] so that the shop fronts stood along that thoroughfare with an air of invitation, like rows of smiling saleswomen. Even on Sunday, when it veiled its more florid charms and lay comparatively empty of passage, the street shone out in contrast to its dingy neighbourhood, like a fire in a forest; and with its freshly painted shutters, well-polished brasses, and general cleanliness and gaiety of note, instantly caught and pleased the eye of the passenger.[5]

Two doors from one corner, on the left hand going east, the line was broken by the entry of a court; and just at that point, a certain sinister block of building thrust forward its gable on the street. It was two storeys high; showed no window, nothing but a door on the lower storey and a blind forehead of discoloured wall on the upper; and bore in every feature, the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence. The door, which was equipped with neither bell nor knocker, was blistered and distained.[6] Tramps slouched into the recess and struck matches on the panels; children kept shop upon the steps; the schoolboy had tried his knife on the mouldings; and for close on a generation, no one had appeared to drive away these random visitors or to repair their ravages.

Mr. Enfield and the lawyer were on the other side of the by-street; but when they came abreast of the entry, the former lifted up his cane and pointed.

"Did you ever remark that door?" he asked; and when his companion had replied in the affirmative, "It is connected in my mind," added he, "with a very odd story."

"Indeed?" said Mr. Utterson, with a slight change of voice, "and what was that?"

"Well, it was this way," returned Mr. Enfield: "I was coming home from some place at the end of the world, about three o'clock of a black winter morning, and my way lay through a part of town where there was literally nothing to be seen but lamps. Street after street, and all the folks asleep—street after street, all lighted up as if for a procession and all as empty as a church—till at last I got into that state of mind when a man listens and listens and begins to long for the sight of a policeman. All at once, I saw two figures: one a little man who was stumping along eastward at a good walk, and the other a girl of maybe eight or ten who was running as hard as she was able down a cross street. Well, sir, the two ran into one another naturally enough at the corner; and then came the horrible part of the thing; for the man trampled calmly over the child's body and left her screaming on the ground. It sounds nothing to hear, but it was hellish to see. It wasn't like a man; it was like some damned Juggernaut.[7] I gave a view halloa,[8] took to my heels, collared my gentleman, and brought him back to where there was already quite a group about the screaming child. He was perfectly cool and made no resistance, but gave me one look, so ugly that it brought out the sweat on me like running. The people who had turned out were the girl's own family; and pretty soon, the doctor, for whom she had been sent, put in his appearance. Well, the child was not much the worse, more frightened, according to the Sawbones;[9] and there you might have supposed would be an end to it. But there was one curious circumstance. I had taken a loathing to my gentleman at first sight. So had the child's family, which was only natural. But the doctor's case was what struck me. He was the usual cut and dry apothecary, of no particular age and colour, with a strong Edinburgh accent, and about as emotional as a bagpipe. Well, sir, he was like the rest of us; every time he looked at my prisoner, I saw that Sawbones turn sick and white with the desire to kill him. I knew what was in his mind, just as he knew what was in mine; and killing being out of the question, we did the next best. We told the man we

could and would make such a scandal out of this, as should make his name stink from one end of London to the other. If he had any friends or any credit,[1] we undertook that he should lose them. And all the time, as we were pitching it in red hot, we were keeping the women off him as best we could, for they were as wild as harpies.[2] I never saw a circle of such hateful faces; and there was the man in the middle, with a kind of black, sneering coolness—frightened too, I could see that—but carrying it off, sir, really like Satan. 'If you choose to make capital out of this accident,' said he, 'I am naturally helpless. No gentleman but wishes to avoid a scene,' says he. 'Name your figure.' Well, we screwed him up to a hundred pounds for the child's family; he would have clearly liked to stick out; but there was something about the lot of us that meant mischief, and at last he struck.[3] The next thing was to get the money; and where do you think he carried us but to that place with the door?—whipped out a key, went in, and presently came back with the matter of ten pounds in gold and a cheque for the balance on Coutts's,[4] drawn payable to bearer and signed with a name that I can't mention, though it's one of the points of my story, but it was a name at least very well known and often printed. The figure was stiff; but the signature was good for more than that, if it was only genuine. I took the liberty of pointing out to my gentleman that the whole business looked apocryphal, and that a man does not, in real life, walk into a cellar door at four in the morning and come out of it with another man's cheque for close upon a hundred pounds. But he was quite easy and sneering. 'Set your mind at rest,' says he, 'I will stay with you till the banks open and cash the cheque myself.' So we all set off, the doctor, and the child's father, and our friend and myself, and passed the rest of the night in my chambers; and next day, when we had breakfasted, went in a body to the bank. I gave in the check myself, and said I had every reason to believe it was a forgery. Not a bit of it. The cheque was genuine."

"Tut-tut," said Mr. Utterson.

"I see you feel as I do," said Mr. Enfield. "Yes, it's a bad story. For my man was a fellow that nobody could have to do with, a really

damnable man; and the person that drew the cheque is the very pink of the proprieties, celebrated too, and (what makes it worse) one of your fellows who do what they call good. Black mail, I suppose; an honest man paying through the nose for some of the capers of his youth. Black Mail House is what I call that place with the door, in consequence. Though even that, you know, is far from explaining all," he added, and with the words fell into a vein of musing.

From this he was recalled by Mr. Utterson asking rather suddenly: "And you don't know if the drawer of the cheque lives there?"

"A likely place, isn't it?" returned Mr. Enfield. "But I happen to have noticed his address; he lives in some square or other."

"And you never asked about the—place with the door?" said Mr. Utterson.

"No, sir: I had a delicacy," was the reply. "I feel very strongly about putting questions; it partakes too much of the style of the day of judgment. You start a question, and it's like starting a stone. You sit quietly on the top of a hill; and away the stone goes, starting others; and presently some bland old bird (the last you would have thought of) is knocked on the head in his own back garden and the family have to change their name. No, sir, I make it a rule of mine: the more it looks like Queer Street,[5] the less I ask."

"A very good rule, too," said the lawyer.

"But I have studied the place for myself," continued Mr. Enfield. "It seems scarcely a house. There is no other door, and nobody goes in or out of that one but, once in a great while, the gentleman of my adventure. There are three windows looking on the court on the first floor;[6] none below; the windows are always shut but they're clean. And then there is a chimney which is generally smoking; so somebody must live there. And yet it's not so sure; for the buildings are so packed together about that court, that it's hard to say where one ends and another begins."

The pair walked on again for a while in silence; and then "Enfield," said Mr. Utterson, "that's a good rule of yours."

"Yes, I think it is," returned Enfield.

“But for all that,” continued the lawyer, “there’s one point I want to ask: I want to ask the name of that man who walked over the child.”

“Well,” said Mr. Enfield, “I can’t see what harm it would do. It was a man of the name of Hyde.”

“H’m,” said Mr. Utterson. “What sort of a man is he to see?”

“He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn’t specify the point. He’s an extraordinary looking man, and yet I really can name nothing out of the way. No, sir; I can make no hand of it; I can’t describe him. And it’s not want of memory; for I declare I can see him this moment.”

Mr. Utterson again walked some way in silence and obviously under a weight of consideration. “You are sure he used a key?” he inquired at last.

“My dear sir . . .” began Enfield, surprised out of himself.

“Yes, I know,” said Utterson; “I know it must seem strange. The fact is, if I do not ask you the name of the other party, it is because I know it already. You see, Richard, your tale has gone home. If you have been inexact in any point, you had better correct it.”

“I think you might have warned me,” returned the other with a touch of sullenness. “But I have been pedantically exact, as you call it. The fellow had a key; and what’s more, he has it still. I saw him use it, not a week ago.”

Mr. Utterson sighed deeply but said never a word; and the young man presently resumed. “Here is another lesson to say nothing,” said he. “I am ashamed of my long tongue. Let us make a bargain never to refer to this again.”

“With all my heart,” said the lawyer. “I shake hands on that, Richard.”

Endnotes

- Note 1: Proved.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Refusal of responsibility for one's fellow human beings. After Cain kills his brother, Abel, and God asks where Abel is, Cain responds, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Universality.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Attractive display.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Passerby.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Discolored.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A relentless destructive force. From Jagannath, a Hindu deity considered a form of Vishnu or his avatar Krishna. Pilgrims travel to an annual festival to watch a huge statue of the god dragged on a cart through Puri, a city in the Indian state of Odisha; 19th-century reports, furnished by European travelers, of worshippers throwing themselves under the wheels to be crushed were most likely apocryphal.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Shout.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Doctor (slang).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Good name.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In classical mythology monsters with women's faces and bodies and birds' wings and claws.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Gave in.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A prestigious London bank.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, looks like someone is in trouble or a bad fix (slang).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, the first floor above the ground floor (what Americans call the second floor).Return to reference 6

Search for Mr. Hyde

That evening Mr. Utterson came home to his bachelor house in sombre spirits and sat down to dinner without relish. It was his custom of a Sunday, when this meal was over, to sit close by the fire, a volume of some dry divinity[7] on his reading desk, until the clock of the neighbouring church rang out the hour of twelve, when he would go soberly and gratefully to bed. On this night, however, as soon as the cloth was taken away, he took up a candle and went into his business room. There he opened his safe, took from the most private part of it a document endorsed on the envelope as Dr. Jekyll's Will, and sat down with a clouded brow to study its contents. The will was holograph,[8] for Mr. Utterson, though he took charge of it now that it was made, had refused to lend the least assistance in the making of it; it provided not only that, in case of the decease of Henry Jekyll, M.D., D.C.L., LL.D., F.R.S.,[9] etc., all his possessions were to pass into the hands of his "friend and benefactor Edward Hyde," but that in case of Dr. Jekyll's "disappearance or unexplained absence for any period exceeding three calendar months," the said Edward Hyde should step into the said Henry Jekyll's shoes without further delay and free from any burthen or obligation, beyond the payment of a few small sums to the members of the doctor's household. This document had long been the lawyer's eyesore. It offended him both as a lawyer and as a lover of the sane and customary sides of life, to whom the fanciful was the immodest. And hitherto it was his ignorance of Mr. Hyde that had swelled his indignation; now, by a sudden turn, it was his knowledge. It was already bad enough when the name was but a name of which he could learn no more. It was worse when it began to be clothed upon with detestable attributes; and out of the shifting, insubstantial mists that had so long baffled his eye, there leaped up the sudden, definite presentment[1] of a fiend.

"I thought it was madness," he said, as he replaced the obnoxious paper in the safe, "and now I begin to fear it is disgrace."

With that he blew out his candle, put on a greatcoat, and set forth in the direction of Cavendish Square, that citadel of medicine,[2] where his friend, the great Dr. Lanyon, had his house and received his crowding patients. "If anyone knows, it will be Lanyon," he had thought.

The solemn butler knew and welcomed him; he was subjected to no stage of delay, but ushered direct from the door to the dining-room where Dr. Lanyon sat alone over his wine. This was a hearty, healthy, dapper, red-faced gentleman, with a shock of hair prematurely white, and a boisterous and decided manner. At sight of Mr. Utterson, he sprang up from his chair and welcomed him with both hands. The geniality, as was the way of the man, was somewhat theatrical to the eye; but it reposed on genuine feeling. For these two were old friends, old mates both at school and college, both thorough respecters of themselves and of each other, and, what does not always follow, men who thoroughly enjoyed each other's company.

After a little rambling talk, the lawyer led up to the subject which so disagreeably preoccupied his mind.

"I suppose, Lanyon," said he, "you and I must be the two oldest friends that Henry Jekyll has?"

"I wish the friends were younger," chuckled Dr. Lanyon. "But I suppose we are. And what of that? I see little of him now."

"Indeed?" said Utterson. "I thought you had a bond of common interest."

"We had," was the reply. "But it is more than ten years since Henry Jekyll became too fanciful for me. He began to go wrong, wrong in mind; and though of course I continue to take an interest in him for old sake's sake, as they say, I see and I have seen devilish little of the man. Such unscientific balderdash," added the doctor, flushing suddenly purple, "would have estranged Damon and Pythias."[3]

This little spirit of temper was somewhat of a relief to Mr. Utterson. "They have only differed on some point of science," he thought; and being a man of no scientific passions (except in the

matter of conveyancing,[4]) he even added: “It is nothing worse than that!” He gave his friend a few seconds to recover his composure, and then approached the question he had come to put. “Did you ever come across a protégé of his—one Hyde?” he asked.

“Hyde?” repeated Lanyon. “No. Never heard of him. Since my time.”

That was the amount of information that the lawyer carried back with him to the great, dark bed on which he tossed to and fro, until the small hours of the morning began to grow large. It was a night of little ease to his toiling mind, toiling in mere[5] darkness and besieged by questions.

Six o’clock struck on the bells of the church that was so conveniently near to Mr. Utterson’s dwelling, and still he was digging at the problem. Hitherto it had touched him on the intellectual side alone; but now his imagination also was engaged, or rather enslaved; and as he lay and tossed in the gross darkness of the night and the curtained room, Mr. Enfield’s tale went by before his mind in a scroll of lighted pictures. He would be aware of the great field of lamps of a nocturnal city; then of the figure of a man walking swiftly; then of a child running from the doctor’s; and then these met, and that human Juggernaut trod the child down and passed on regardless of her screams. Or else he would see a room in a rich house, where his friend lay asleep, dreaming and smiling at his dreams; and then the door of that room would be opened, the curtains of the bed plucked apart, and the sleeper recalled,[6] and lo! there would stand by his side a figure to whom power was given, and even at that dead hour, he must rise and do its bidding. The figure in these two phases haunted the lawyer all night; and if at any time he dozed over, it was but to see it glide more stealthily through sleeping houses, or move the more swiftly and still the more swiftly, even to dizziness, through wider labyrinths of lamp-lighted city, and at every street corner crush a child and leave her screaming. And still the figure had no face by which he might know it; even in his dreams, it had no face, or one that baffled him and melted before his eyes; and thus it was that there sprang up and grew apace in the

lawyer's mind a singularly strong, almost an inordinate, curiosity to behold the features of the real Mr. Hyde. If he could but once set eyes on him, he thought the mystery would lighten and perhaps roll altogether away, as was the habit of mysterious things when well examined. He might see a reason for his friend's strange preference or bondage (call it which you please) and even for the startling clause of the will. At least it would be a face worth seeing: the face of a man who was without bowels of mercy:[7] a face which had but to show itself to raise up, in the mind of the unimpressionable Enfield, a spirit of enduring hatred.

From that time forward, Mr. Utterson began to haunt the door in the bystreet of shops. In the morning before office hours, at noon when business was plenty, and time scarce, at night under the face of the fogged city moon, by all lights and at all hours of solitude or concourse, the lawyer was to be found on his chosen post.

"If he be Mr. Hyde," he had thought, "I shall be Mr. Seek."

And at last his patience was rewarded. It was a fine dry night; frost in the air; the streets as clean as a ballroom floor; the lamps, unshaken by any wind, drawing a regular pattern of light and shadow. By ten o'clock, when the shops were closed, the by-street was very solitary and, in spite of the low growl of London from all round, very silent. Small sounds carried far; domestic sounds out of the houses were clearly audible on either side of the roadway; and the rumour[8] of the approach of any passenger preceded him by a long time. Mr. Utterson had been some minutes at his post, when he was aware of an odd, light footstep drawing near. In the course of his nightly patrols, he had long grown accustomed to the quaint effect with which the footfalls of a single person, while he is still a great way off, suddenly spring out distinct from the vast hum and clatter of the city. Yet his attention had never before been so sharply and decisively arrested; and it was with a strong, superstitious prevision of success that he withdrew into the entry of the court.

The steps drew swiftly nearer, and swelled out suddenly louder as they turned the end of the street. The lawyer, looking forth from the entry, could soon see what manner of man he had to deal with.

He was small and very plainly dressed, and the look of him, even at that distance, went somehow strongly against the watcher's inclination. But he made straight for the door, crossing the roadway to save time; and as he came, he drew a key from his pocket like one approaching home.

Mr. Utterson stepped out and touched him on the shoulder as he passed. "Mr. Hyde, I think?"

Mr. Hyde shrank back with a hissing intake of the breath. But his fear was only momentary; and though he did not look the lawyer in the face, he answered coolly enough: "That is my name. What do you want?"

"I see you are going in," returned the lawyer. "I am an old friend of Dr. Jekyll's—Mr. Utterson of Gaunt Street—you must have heard my name; and meeting you so conveniently, I thought you might admit me."

"You will not find Dr. Jekyll; he is from home," replied Mr. Hyde, blowing in the key. And then suddenly, but still without looking up, "How did you know me?" he asked.

"On your side," said Mr. Utterson, "will you do me a favour?"

"With pleasure," replied the other. "What shall it be?"

"Will you let me see your face?" asked the lawyer.

Mr. Hyde appeared to hesitate, and then, as if upon some sudden reflection, fronted about with an air of defiance; and the pair stared at each other pretty fixedly for a few seconds. "Now I shall know you again," said Mr. Utterson. "It may be useful."

"Yes," returned Mr. Hyde, "it is as well we have met; and *à propos*, you should have my address." And he gave a number of a street in Soho.[9]

"Good God!" thought Mr. Utterson, "can he, too, have been thinking of the will?" But he kept his feelings to himself and only grunted in acknowledgment of the address.

"And now," said the other, "how did you know me?"

"By description," was the reply.

"Whose description?"

"We have common friends," said Mr. Utterson.

"Common friends?" echoed Mr. Hyde, a little hoarsely. "Who are they?"

"Jekyll, for instance," said the lawyer.

"He never told you," cried Mr. Hyde, with a flush of anger. "I did not think you would have lied."

"Come," said Mr. Utterson, "that is not fitting language."

The other snarled aloud into a savage laugh; and the next moment, with extraordinary quickness, he had unlocked the door and disappeared into the house.

The lawyer stood awhile when Mr. Hyde had left him, the picture of disquietude. Then he began slowly to mount the street, pausing every step or two and putting his hand to his brow like a man in mental perplexity. The problem he was thus debating as he walked, was one of a class that is rarely solved. Mr. Hyde was pale and dwarfish, he gave an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation, he had a displeasing smile, he had borne himself to the lawyer with a sort of murderous mixture of timidity and boldness, and he spoke with a husky, whispering and somewhat broken voice; all these were points against him, but not all of these together could explain the hitherto unknown disgust, loathing and fear with which Mr. Utterson regarded him. "There must be something else," said the perplexed gentleman. "There *is* something more, if I could find a name for it. God bless me, the man seems hardly human! Something troglodytic,[1] shall we say? or can it be the old story of Dr. Fell?[2] or is it the mere radiance of a foul soul that thus transpires through, and transfigures, its clay continent?[3] The last, I think; for, O my poor old Harry Jekyll, if ever I read Satan's signature upon a face, it is on that of your new friend."

Round the corner from the by-street, there was a square of ancient, handsome houses, now for the most part decayed from their high estate and let in flats and chambers to all sorts and conditions of men: map-engravers, architects, shady lawyers and the agents of obscure enterprises. One house, however, second from the corner, was still occupied entire; and at the door of this, which wore

a great air of wealth and comfort, though it was now plunged in darkness except for the fanlight, Mr. Utterson stopped and knocked. A well-dressed, elderly servant opened the door.

"Is Dr. Jekyll at home, Poole?" asked the lawyer.

"I will see, Mr. Utterson," said Poole, admitting the visitor, as he spoke, into a large, low-roofed, comfortable hall, paved with flags,[4] warmed (after the fashion of a country house) by a bright, open fire, and furnished with costly cabinets of oak. "Will you wait here by the fire, sir? or shall I give you a light in the dining-room?"

"Here, thank you," said the lawyer, and he drew near and leaned on the tall fender.[5] This hall, in which he was now left alone, was a pet fancy of his friend the doctor's; and Utterson himself was wont to speak of it as the pleasantest room in London. But to-night there was a shudder in his blood; the face of Hyde sat heavy on his memory; he felt (what was rare with him) a nausea and distaste of life; and in the gloom of his spirits, he seemed to read a menace in the flickering of the firelight on the polished cabinets and the uneasy starting of the shadow on the roof. He was ashamed of his relief, when Poole presently returned to announce that Dr. Jekyll was gone out.

"I saw Mr. Hyde go in by the old dissecting-room door, Poole," he said. "Is that right, when Dr. Jekyll is from home?"

"Quite right, Mr. Utterson, sir," replied the servant. "Mr. Hyde has a key."

"Your master seems to repose a great deal of trust in that young man, Poole," resumed the other musingly.

"Yes, sir, he do indeed," said Poole. "We have all orders to obey him."

"I do not think I ever met Mr. Hyde?" asked Utterson.

"O, dear no, sir. He never *dines* here," replied the butler. "Indeed we see very little of him on this side of the house; he mostly comes and goes by the laboratory."

"Well, good-night, Poole."

"Good-night, Mr. Utterson."

And the lawyer set out homeward with a very heavy heart. "Poor Harry Jekyll," he thought, "my mind misgives me he is in deep waters! He was wild when he was young; a long while ago to be sure; but in the law of God, there is no statute of limitations. Ay, it must be that; the ghost of some old sin, the cancer of some concealed disgrace: punishment coming, *pede claudo*,[6] years after memory has forgotten and self-love condoned the fault." And the lawyer, scared by the thought, brooded awhile on his own past, groping in all the corners of memory, lest by chance some Jack-in-the-Box of an old iniquity should leap to light there. His past was fairly blameless; few men could read the rolls of their life with less apprehension; yet he was humbled to the dust by the many ill things he had done, and raised up again into a sober and fearful gratitude by the many that he had come so near to doing, yet avoided. And then by a return on his former subject, he conceived a spark of hope. "This Master Hyde, if he were studied," thought he, "must have secrets of his own; black secrets, by the look of him; secrets compared to which poor Jekyll's worst would be like sunshine. Things cannot continue as they are. It turns me cold to think of this creature stealing like a thief to Harry's bedside; poor Harry, what a wakening! And the danger of it; for if this Hyde suspects the existence of the will, he may grow impatient to inherit. Ay, I must put my shoulder to the wheel—if Jekyll will but let me," he added, "if Jekyll will only let me." For once more he saw before his mind's eye, as clear as a transparency, the strange clauses of the will.

Endnotes

- Note 7: Theology.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: In the author's handwriting.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Doctor of Medicine, Doctor of Civil Law, Doctor of Laws, and Fellow of the Royal Society, respectively.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Image.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: A once-aristocratic neighborhood where fashionable doctors had their offices. "Greatcoat": long, heavy overcoat.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Two inseparable youths in Greek legend whose willingness to die for each other symbolizes true friendship.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Legal transfer of property by writing deeds.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Pure.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Revived, awakened.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Compassion.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Noise.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Seedy district in central London. "*À propos*": by the way (French).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Like a prehistoric cave dweller or apelike.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A figure from the nursery rhyme "I do not like thee Dr. Fell; / The reason why I cannot tell."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Container.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Flagstones, large stone slabs.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Metal frame in front of a fireplace.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: With lame foot (Latin). From the Roman poet Horace's *Odes* 3.2.32: "Rarely has Vengeance with her lame foot abandoned the wicked man with a head start on her."Return to reference 6

Dr. Jekyll Was Quite at Ease

A fortnight later, by excellent good fortune, the doctor gave one of his pleasant dinners to some five or six old cronies, all intelligent, reputable men and all judges of good wine; and Mr. Utterson so contrived that he remained behind after the others had departed. This was no new arrangement, but a thing that had befallen many scores of times. Where Utterson was liked, he was liked well. Hosts loved to detain the dry lawyer, when the light-hearted and the loose-tongued had already their foot on the threshold; they liked to sit awhile in his unobtrusive company, practising for solitude, sobering their minds in the man's rich silence after the expense and strain of gaiety. To this rule, Dr. Jekyll was no exception; and as he now sat on the opposite side of the fire—a large, well-made, smooth-faced man of fifty, with something of a slyish cast perhaps, but every mark of capacity and kindness—you could see by his looks that he cherished for Mr. Utterson a sincere and warm affection.

"I have been wanting to speak to you, Jekyll," began the latter. "You know that will of yours?"

A close observer might have gathered that the topic was distasteful; but the doctor carried it off gaily. "My poor Utterson," said he, "you are unfortunate in such a client. I never saw a man so distressed as you were by my will; unless it were that hide-bound pedant, Lanyon, at what he called my scientific heresies. O, I know he's a good fellow—you needn't frown—an excellent fellow, and I always mean to see more of him; but a hide-bound pedant for all that; an ignorant, blatant pedant. I was never more disappointed in any man than Lanyon."

"You know I never approved of it," pursued Utterson, ruthlessly disregarding the fresh topic.

"My will? Yes, certainly, I know that," said the doctor, a trifle sharply. "You have told me so."

"Well, I tell you so again," continued the lawyer. "I have been learning something of young Hyde."

The large handsome face of Dr. Jekyll grew pale to the very lips, and there came a blackness about his eyes. "I do not care to hear more," said he. "This is a matter I thought we had agreed to drop."

"What I heard was abominable," said Utterson.

"It can make no change. You do not understand my position," returned the doctor, with a certain incoherency of manner. "I am painfully situated, Utterson; my position is a very strange—a very strange one. It is one of those affairs that cannot be mended by talking."

"Jekyll," said Utterson, "you know me: I am a man to be trusted. Make a clean breast of this in confidence; and I make no doubt I can get you out of it."

"My good Utterson," said the doctor, "this is very good of you, this is downright good of you, and I cannot find words to thank you in. I believe you fully; I would trust you before any man alive, ay, before myself, if I could make the choice; but indeed it isn't what you fancy; it is not so bad as that; and just to put your good heart at rest, I will tell you one thing: the moment I choose, I can be rid of Mr. Hyde. I give you my hand upon that; and I thank you again and again; and I will just add one little word, Utterson, that I'm sure you'll take in good part: this is a private matter, and I beg of you to let it sleep."

Utterson reflected a little, looking in the fire.

"I have no doubt you are perfectly right," he said at last, getting to his feet.

"Well, but since we have touched upon this business, and for the last time I hope," continued the doctor, "there is one point I should like you to understand. I have really a very great interest in poor Hyde. I know you have seen him; he told me so; and I fear he was rude. But I do sincerely take a great, a very great interest in that young man; and if I am taken away, Utterson, I wish you to promise me that you will bear with him and get his rights for him. I think you would, if you knew all; and it would be a weight off my mind if you would promise."

"I can't pretend that I shall ever like him," said the lawyer.

"I don't ask that," pleaded Jekyll, laying his hand upon the other's arm; "I only ask for justice; I only ask you to help him for my sake, when I am no longer here."

Utterson heaved an irrepressible sigh. "Well," said he, "I promise."

The Carew Murder Case

Nearly a year later, in the month of October, 18—, London was startled by a crime of singular ferocity and rendered all the more notable by the high position of the victim. The details were few and startling. A maid servant living alone in a house not far from the river, had gone upstairs to bed about eleven. Although a fog rolled over the city in the small hours, the early part of the night was cloudless, and the lane, which the maid's window overlooked, was brilliantly lit by the full moon. It seems she was romantically given, for she sat down upon her box,[7] which stood immediately under the window, and fell into a dream of musing. Never (she used to say, with streaming tears, when she narrated that experience), never had she felt more at peace with all men or thought more kindly of the world. And as she so sat she became aware of an aged and beautiful gentleman with white hair, drawing near along the lane; and advancing to meet him, another and very small gentleman, to whom at first she paid less attention. When they had come within speech (which was just under the maid's eyes) the older man bowed and accosted the other with a very pretty manner of politeness. It did not seem as if the subject of his address were of great importance; indeed, from his pointing, it sometimes appeared as if he were only inquiring his way; but the moon shone on his face as he spoke, and the girl was pleased to watch it, it seemed to breathe such an innocent and old-world kindness of disposition, yet with something high too, as of a well-founded self-content. Presently her eye wandered to the other, and she was surprised to recognise in him a certain Mr. Hyde, who had once visited her master and for whom she had conceived a dislike. He had in his hand a heavy cane, with which he was trifling; but he answered never a word, and seemed to listen with an ill-contained impatience. And then all of a sudden he broke out in a great flame of anger, stamping with his foot, brandishing the cane, and carrying on (as the maid described it) like a madman. The old gentleman took a step back, with the air of one very much surprised and a trifle hurt; and at that Mr. Hyde broke out of all

bounds and clubbed him to the earth. And next moment, with ape-like fury, he was trampling his victim under foot and hailing down a storm of blows, under which the bones were audibly shattered and the body jumped upon the roadway. At the horror of these sights and sounds, the maid fainted.

It was two o'clock when she came to herself and called for the police. The murderer was gone long ago; but there lay his victim in the middle of the lane, incredibly mangled. The stick with which the deed had been done, although it was of some rare and very tough and heavy wood, had broken in the middle under the stress of this insensate cruelty; and one splintered half had rolled in the neighbouring gutter—the other, without doubt, had been carried away by the murderer. A purse and a gold watch were found upon the victim; but no cards or papers, except a sealed and stamped envelope, which he had been probably carrying to the post,[8] and which bore the name and address of Mr. Utterson.

This was brought to the lawyer the next morning, before he was out of bed; and he had no sooner seen it and been told the circumstances, than he shot out a solemn lip. "I shall say nothing till I have seen the body," said he; "this may be very serious. Have the kindness to wait while I dress." And with the same grave countenance he hurried through his breakfast and drove to the police station, whither the body had been carried. As soon as he came into the cell, he nodded.

"Yes," said he, "I recognise him. I am sorry to say that this is Sir Danvers Carew."

"Good God, sir," exclaimed the officer, "is it possible?" And the next moment his eye lighted up with professional ambition. "This will make a deal of noise," he said. "And perhaps you can help us to the man." And he briefly narrated what the maid had seen, and showed the broken stick.

Mr. Utterson had already quailed at the name of Hyde; but when the stick was laid before him, he could doubt no longer; broken and battered as it was, he recognised it for one that he had himself presented many years before to Henry Jekyll.

"Is this Mr. Hyde a person of small stature?" he inquired.

"Particularly small and particularly wicked-looking, is what the maid calls him," said the officer.

Mr. Utterson reflected; and then, raising his head, "If you will come with me in my cab," he said, "I think I can take you to his house."

It was by this time about nine in the morning, and the first fog of the season. A great chocolate-coloured pall lowered[9] over heaven, but the wind was continually charging and routing these embattled vapours; so that as the cab crawled from street to street, Mr. Utterson beheld a marvellous number of degrees and hues of twilight; for here it would be dark like the back-end of evening; and there would be a glow of a rich, lurid brown, like the light of some strange conflagration; and here, for a moment, the fog would be quite broken up, and a haggard shaft of daylight would glance in between the swirling wreaths. The dismal quarter of Soho seen under these changing glimpses, with its muddy ways, and slatternly passengers, and its lamps, which had never been extinguished or had been kindled afresh to combat this mournful reinvasion of darkness, seemed, in the lawyer's eyes, like a district of some city in a nightmare. The thoughts of his mind, besides, were of the gloomiest dye; and when he glanced at the companion of his drive, he was conscious of some touch of that terror of the law and the law's officers, which may at times assail the most honest.

As the cab drew up before the address indicated, the fog lifted a little and showed him a dingy street, a gin palace, a low French eating house, a shop for the retail of penny numbers[1] and twopenny salads, many ragged children huddled in the doorways, and many women of many different nationalities passing out, key in hand, to have a morning glass; and the next moment the fog settled down again upon that part, as brown as umber, and cut him off from his blackguardly surroundings. This was the home of Henry Jekyll's favourite; of a man who was heir to quarter of a million sterling.[2]

An ivory-faced and silvery-haired old woman opened the door. She had an evil face, smoothed by hypocrisy; but her manners were

excellent. Yes, she said, this was Mr. Hyde's, but he was not at home; he had been in that night very late, but had gone away again in less than an hour; there was nothing strange in that; his habits were very irregular, and he was often absent; for instance, it was nearly two months since she had seen him till yesterday.

"Very well, then, we wish to see his rooms," said the lawyer; and when the woman began to declare it was impossible, "I had better tell you who this person is," he added. "This is Inspector Newcomen of Scotland Yard."

A flash of odious joy appeared upon the woman's face. "Ah!" said she, "he is in trouble! What has he done?"

Mr. Utterson and the inspector exchanged glances. "He don't seem a very popular character," observed the latter. "And now, my good woman, just let me and this gentleman have a look about us."

In the whole extent of the house, which but for the old woman remained otherwise empty, Mr. Hyde had only used a couple of rooms; but these were furnished with luxury and good taste. A closet was filled with wine; the plate was of silver, the napery[3] elegant; a good picture hung upon the walls, a gift (as Utterson supposed) from Henry Jekyll, who was much of a connoisseur; and the carpets were of many piles and agreeable in colour. At this moment, however, the rooms bore every mark of having been recently and hurriedly ransacked; clothes lay about the floor, with their pockets inside out; lock-fast drawers stood open; and on the hearth there lay a pile of gray ashes, as though many papers had been burned. From these embers the inspector disinterred the butt end of a green cheque book, which had resisted the action of the fire; the other half of the stick was found behind the door; and as this clinched his suspicions, the officer declared himself delighted. A visit to the bank, where several thousand pounds were found to be lying to the murderer's credit, completed his gratification.

"You may depend upon it, sir," he told Mr. Utterson: "I have him in my hand. He must have lost his head, or he never would have left the stick or, above all, burned the cheque book. Why, money's life to

the man. We have nothing to do but wait for him at the bank, and get out the handbills."

This last, however, was not so easy of accomplishment; for Mr. Hyde had numbered few familiars—even the master of the servant maid had only seen him twice; his family could nowhere be traced; he had never been photographed; and the few who could describe him differed widely, as common observers will. Only on one point, were they agreed; and that was the haunting sense of unexpressed deformity with which the fugitive impressed his beholders.

Endnotes

- Note 7: Servants, and other members of the poorer classes, typically stored their few items of clothing in a wooden box.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That is, postal letter box.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Was gloomy and threatening.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Cheap serial installments of popular fiction. "Gin palace": cheap bar.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, pounds sterling.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Table linen.Return to reference 3

Incident of the Letter

It was late in the afternoon, when Mr. Utterson found his way to Dr. Jekyll's door, where he was at once admitted by Poole, and carried down by the kitchen offices and across a yard which had once been a garden, to the building which was indifferently[4] known as the laboratory or the dissecting rooms. The doctor had bought the house from the heirs of a celebrated surgeon; and his own tastes being rather chemical than anatomical, had changed the destination[5] of the block at the bottom of the garden. It was the first time that the lawyer had been received in that part of his friend's quarters; and he eyed the dingy, windowless structure with curiosity, and gazed round with a distasteful sense of strangeness as he crossed the theatre,[6] once crowded with eager students and now lying gaunt and silent, the tables laden with chemical apparatus, the floor strewn with crates and littered with packing straw, and the light falling dimly through the foggy cupola. At the further end, a flight of stairs mounted to a door covered with red baize; and through this, Mr. Utterson was at last received into the doctor's cabinet.[7] It was a large room, fitted round with glass presses, furnished, among other things, with a cheval-glass[8] and a business table, and looking out upon the court by three dusty windows barred with iron. A fire burned in the grate; a lamp was set lighted on the chimney shelf, for even in the houses the fog began to lie thickly; and there, close up to the warmth, sat Dr. Jekyll, looking deadly sick. He did not rise to meet his visitor, but held out a cold hand and bade him welcome in a changed voice.

"And now," said Mr. Utterson, as soon as Poole had left them, "you have heard the news?"

The doctor shuddered. "They were crying it in the square," he said. "I heard them in my dining-room."

"One word," said the lawyer. "Carew was my client, but so are you, and I want to know what I am doing. You have not been mad enough to hide this fellow?"

"Utterson, I swear to God," cried the doctor, "I swear to God I will never set eyes on him again. I bind my honour to you that I am done with him in this world. It is all at an end. And indeed he does not want my help; you do not know him as I do; he is safe, he is quite safe; mark my words, he will never more be heard of."

The lawyer listened gloomily; he did not like his friend's feverish manner. "You seem pretty sure of him," said he; "and for your sake, I hope you may be right. If it came to a trial, your name might appear."

"I am quite sure of him," replied Jekyll; "I have grounds for certainty that I cannot share with anyone. But there is one thing on which you may advise me. I have—I have received a letter; and I am at a loss whether I should show it to the police. I should like to leave it in your hands, Utterson; you would judge wisely, I am sure; I have so great a trust in you."

"You fear, I suppose, that it might lead to his detection?" asked the lawyer.

"No," said the other. "I cannot say that I care what becomes of Hyde; I am quite done with him. I was thinking of my own character, which this hateful business has rather exposed."

Utterson ruminated awhile; he was surprised at his friend's selfishness, and yet relieved by it. "Well," said he, at last, "let me see the letter."

The letter was written in an odd, upright hand and signed "Edward Hyde": and it signified, briefly enough, that the writer's benefactor, Dr. Jekyll, whom he had long so unworthily repaid for a thousand generosities, need labour under no alarm for his safety, as he had means of escape on which he placed a sure dependence. The lawyer liked this letter well enough; it put a better colour on the intimacy than he had looked for; and he blamed himself for some of his past suspicions.

"Have you the envelope?" he asked.

"I burned it," replied Jekyll, "before I thought what I was about. But it bore no postmark. The note was handed in."

"Shall I keep this and sleep upon it?" asked Utterson.

"I wish you to judge for me entirely," was the reply. "I have lost confidence in myself."

"Well, I shall consider," returned the lawyer. "And now one word more: it was Hyde who dictated the terms in your will about that disappearance?"

The doctor seemed seized with a qualm of faintness; he shut his mouth tight and nodded.

"I knew it," said Utterson. "He meant to murder you. You have had a fine escape."

"I have had what is far more to the purpose," returned the doctor solemnly: "I have had a lesson—O God, Utterson, what a lesson I have had!" And he covered his face for a moment with his hands.

On his way out, the lawyer stopped and had a word or two with Poole. "By the bye," said he, "there was a letter handed in to-day: what was the messenger like?" But Poole was positive nothing had come except by post; "and only circulars by that," he added.

This news sent off the visitor with his fears renewed. Plainly the letter had come by the laboratory door; possibly, indeed, it had been written in the cabinet; and if that were so, it must be differently judged, and handled with the more caution. The newsboys, as he went, were crying themselves hoarse along the footways: "Special edition. Shocking murder of an M.P."[9] That was the funeral oration of one friend and client; and he could not help a certain apprehension lest the good name of another should be sucked down in the eddy of the scandal. It was, at least, a ticklish decision that he had to make; and self-reliant as he was by habit, he began to cherish a longing for advice. It was not to be had directly; but perhaps, he thought, it might be fished for.

Presently after, he sat on one side of his own hearth, with Mr. Guest, his head clerk, upon the other, and midway between, at a nicely calculated distance from the fire, a bottle of a particular old wine that had long dwelt unsunned in the foundations of his house. The fog still slept on the wing above the drowned city, where the lamps glimmered like carbuncles;[1] and through the muffle and smother of these fallen clouds, the procession of the town's life was

still rolling in through the great arteries with a sound as of a mighty wind. But the room was gay with firelight. In the bottle the acids were long ago resolved; the imperial dye[2] had softened with time, as the colour grows richer in stained windows; and the glow of hot autumn afternoons on hillside vineyards, was ready to be set free and to disperse the fogs of London. Insensibly the lawyer melted. There was no man from whom he kept fewer secrets than Mr. Guest; and he was not always sure that he kept as many as he meant. Guest had often been on business to the doctor's; he knew Poole; he could scarce have failed to hear of Mr. Hyde's familiarity about the house; he might draw conclusions: was it not as well, then, that he should see a letter which put that mystery to rights? and above all since Guest, being a great student and critic of handwriting, would consider the step natural and obliging? The clerk, besides, was a man of counsel; he would scarce read so strange a document without dropping a remark; and by that remark Mr. Utterson might shape his future course.

"This is a sad business about Sir Danvers," he said.

"Yes, sir, indeed. It has elicited a great deal of public feeling," returned Guest. "The man, of course, was mad."

"I should like to hear your views on that," replied Utterson. "I have a document here in his handwriting; it is between ourselves, for I scarce know what to do about it; it is an ugly business at the best. But there it is; quite in your way: a murderer's autograph."

Guest's eyes brightened, and he sat down at once and studied it with passion. "No, sir," he said: "not mad; but it is an odd hand."

"And by all accounts a very odd writer," added the lawyer.

Just then the servant entered with a note.

"Is that from Dr. Jekyll, sir?" inquired the clerk. "I thought I knew the writing. Anything private, Mr. Utterson?"

"Only an invitation to dinner. Why? Do you want to see it?"

"One moment. I thank you, sir;" and the clerk laid the two sheets of paper alongside and sedulously compared their contents. "Thank you, sir," he said at last, returning both; "it's a very interesting autograph."

There was a pause, during which Mr. Utterson struggled with himself. “Why did you compare them, Guest?” he inquired suddenly.

“Well, sir,” returned the clerk, “there’s a rather singular resemblance; the two hands are in many points identical: only differently sloped.”

“Rather quaint,”[3] said Utterson.

“It is, as you say, rather quaint,” returned Guest.

“I wouldn’t speak of this note, you know,” said the master.

“No, sir,” said the clerk. “I understand.”

But no sooner was Mr. Utterson alone that night than he locked the note into his safe, where it reposed from that time forward. “What!” he thought. “Henry Jekyll forge for a murderer!” And his blood ran cold in his veins.

Endnotes

- Note 4: Without distinction.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Purpose.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Room with tiers of rising seats surrounding a central platform, used for lectures and medical demonstrations.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Small private room. “Baize”: coarse woolen material.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Large freestanding mirror, hinged on a frame. “Presses”: cupboards with glass doors.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Member of Parliament.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Precious fiery-red stones.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Purple.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Odd, unusual.Return to reference 3

Remarkable Incident of Dr. Lanyon

Time ran on; thousands of pounds were offered in reward, for the death of Sir Danvers was resented as a public injury; but Mr. Hyde had disappeared out of the ken of the police as though he had never existed. Much of his past was unearthed, indeed, and all disreputable: tales came out of the man's cruelty, at once so callous and violent; of his vile life, of his strange associates, of the hatred that seemed to have surrounded his career; but of his present whereabouts, not a whisper. From the time he had left the house in Soho on the morning of the murder, he was simply blotted out; and gradually, as time drew on, Mr. Utterson began to recover from the hotness of his alarm, and to grow more at quiet with himself. The death of Sir Danvers was, to his way of thinking, more than paid for by the disappearance of Mr. Hyde. Now that that evil influence had been withdrawn, a new life began for Dr. Jekyll. He came out of his seclusion, renewed relations with his friends, became once more their familiar guest and entertainer; and whilst he had always been known for charities, he was now no less distinguished for religion. He was busy, he was much in the open air, he did good; his face seemed to open and brighten, as if with an inward consciousness of service; and for more than two months, the doctor was at peace.

On the 8th of January Utterson had dined at the doctor's with a small party; Lanyon had been there; and the face of the host had looked from one to the other as in the old days when the trio were inseparable friends. On the 12th, and again on the 14th, the door was shut against the lawyer. "The doctor was confined to the house," Poole said, "and saw no one." On the 15th, he tried again, and was again refused; and having now been used for the last two months to see his friend almost daily, he found this return of solitude to weigh upon his spirits. The fifth night he had in Guest to dine with him; and the sixth he betook himself to Dr. Lanyon's.

There at least he was not denied admittance; but when he came in, he was shocked at the change which had taken place in the doctor's appearance. He had his death-warrant written legibly upon

his face. The rosy man had grown pale; his flesh had fallen away; he was visibly balder and older; and yet it was not so much these tokens of a swift physical decay that arrested the lawyer's notice, as a look in the eye and quality of manner that seemed to testify to some deep-seated terror of the mind. It was unlikely that the doctor should fear death; and yet that was what Utterson was tempted to suspect. "Yes," he thought; "he is a doctor, he must know his own state and that his days are counted; and the knowledge is more than he can bear." And yet when Utterson remarked on his ill-looks, it was with an air of great firmness that Lanyon declared himself a doomed man.

"I have had a shock," he said, "and I shall never recover. It is a question of weeks. Well, life has been pleasant; I liked it; yes, sir, I used to like it. I sometimes think if we knew all, we should be more glad to get away."

"Jekyll is ill, too," observed Utterson. "Have you seen him?"

But Lanyon's face changed, and he held up a trembling hand. "I wish to see or hear no more of Dr. Jekyll," he said in a loud, unsteady voice. "I am quite done with that person; and I beg that you will spare me any allusion to one whom I regard as dead."

"Tut-tut," said Mr. Utterson; and then after a considerable pause, "Can't I do anything?" he inquired. "We are three very old friends, Lanyon; we shall not live to make others."

"Nothing can be done," returned Lanyon; "ask himself."

"He will not see me," said the lawyer.

"I am not surprised at that," was the reply. "Some day, Utterson, after I am dead, you may perhaps come to learn the right and wrong of this. I cannot tell you. And in the meantime, if you can sit and talk with me of other things, for God's sake, stay and do so; but if you cannot keep clear of this accursed topic, then, in God's name, go, for I cannot bear it."

As soon as he got home, Utterson sat down and wrote to Jekyll, complaining of his exclusion from the house, and asking the cause of this unhappy break with Lanyon; and the next day brought him a long answer, often very pathetically worded, and sometimes darkly

mysterious in drift. The quarrel with Lanyon was incurable. "I do not blame our old friend," Jekyll wrote, "but I share his view that we must never meet. I mean from henceforth to lead a life of extreme seclusion; you must not be surprised, nor must you doubt my friendship, if my door is often shut even to you. You must suffer me to go my own dark way. I have brought on myself a punishment and a danger that I cannot name. If I am the chief of sinners, I am the chief of sufferers also. I could not think that this earth contained a place for sufferings and terrors so unmanning; and you can do but one thing, Utterson, to lighten this destiny, and that is to respect my silence." Utterson was amazed; the dark influence of Hyde had been withdrawn, the doctor had returned to his old tasks and amities; a week ago, the prospect had smiled with every promise of a cheerful and an honoured age; and now in a moment, friendship, and peace of mind, and the whole tenor of his life were wrecked. So great and unprepared a change pointed to madness; but in view of Lanyon's manner and words, there must lie for it some deeper ground.

A week afterwards Dr. Lanyon took to his bed, and in something less than a fortnight he was dead. The night after the funeral, at which he had been sadly affected, Utterson locked the door of his business room, and sitting there by the light of a melancholy candle, drew out and set before him an envelope addressed by the hand and sealed with the seal of his dead friend. "PRIVATE: for the hands of G. J. Utterson ALONE, and in case of his predecease *to be destroyed unread*," so it was emphatically superscribed; and the lawyer dreaded to behold the contents. "I have buried one friend today," he thought: "what if this should cost me another?" And then he condemned the fear as a disloyalty, and broke the seal. Within there was another enclosure, likewise sealed, and marked upon the cover as "not to be opened till the death or disappearance of Dr. Henry Jekyll." Utterson could not trust his eyes. Yes, it was disappearance; here again, as in the mad will which he had long ago restored to its author, here again were the idea of a disappearance and the name of Henry Jekyll bracketted. But in the will, that idea had sprung from the sinister suggestion of the man Hyde; it was set there with a

purpose all too plain and horrible. Written by the hand of Lanyon, what should it mean? A great curiosity came on the trustee, to disregard the prohibition and dive at once to the bottom of these mysteries; but professional honour and faith to his dead friend were stringent obligations; and the packet slept in the inmost corner of his private safe.

It is one thing to mortify curiosity, another to conquer it; and it may be doubted if, from that day forth, Utterson desired the society of his surviving friend with the same eagerness. He thought of him kindly; but his thoughts were disquieted and fearful. He went to call indeed; but he was perhaps relieved to be denied admittance; perhaps, in his heart, he preferred to speak with Poole upon the doorstep and surrounded by the air and sounds of the open city, rather than to be admitted into that house of voluntary bondage, and to sit and speak with its inscrutable recluse. Poole had, indeed, no very pleasant news to communicate. The doctor, it appeared, now more than ever confined himself to the cabinet over the laboratory, where he would sometimes even sleep; he was out of spirits, he had grown very silent, he did not read; it seemed as if he had something on his mind. Utterson became so used to the unvarying character of these reports, that he fell off little by little in the frequency of his visits.

Incident at the Window

It chanced on Sunday, when Mr. Utterson was on his usual walk with Mr. Enfield, that their way lay once again through the by-street; and that when they came in front of the door, both stopped to gaze on it.

"Well," said Enfield, "that story's at an end at least. We shall never see more of Mr. Hyde."

"I hope not," said Utterson. "Did I ever tell you that I once saw him, and shared your feeling of repulsion?"

"It was impossible to do the one without the other," returned Enfield. "And by the way, what an ass you must have thought me, not to know that this was a back way to Dr. Jekyll's! It was partly your own fault that I found it out, even when I did."

"So you found it out, did you?" said Utterson. "But if that be so, we may step into the court and take a look at the windows. To tell you the truth, I am uneasy about poor Jekyll; and even outside, I feel as if the presence of a friend might do him good."

The court was very cool and a little damp, and full of premature twilight, although the sky, high up overhead, was still bright with sunset. The middle one of the three windows was half way open; and sitting close beside it, taking the air with an infinite sadness of mien, like some disconsolate prisoner, Utterson saw Dr. Jekyll.

"What! Jekyll!" he cried. "I trust you are better."

"I am very low, Utterson," replied the doctor, drearily, "very low. It will not last long, thank God."

"You stay too much indoors," said the lawyer. "You should be out, whipping up the circulation like Mr. Enfield and me. (This is my cousin—Mr. Enfield—Dr. Jekyll.) Come now; get your hat and take a quick turn with us."

"You are very good," sighed the other. "I should like to very much; but no, no, no, it is quite impossible; I dare not. But indeed, Utterson, I am very glad to see you; this is really a great pleasure; I would ask you and Mr. Enfield up, but the place is really not fit."

"Why then," said the lawyer, good-naturedly, "the best thing we can do is to stay down here and speak with you from where we are."

"That is just what I was about to venture to propose," returned the doctor with a smile. But the words were hardly uttered, before the smile was struck out of his face and succeeded by an expression of such abject terror and despair, as froze the very blood of the two gentlemen below. They saw it but for a glimpse, for the window was instantly thrust down; but that glimpse had been sufficient, and they turned and left the court without a word. In silence, too, they traversed the by-street; and it was not until they had come into a neighbouring thoroughfare, where even upon a Sunday there were still some stirrings of life, that Mr. Utterson at last turned and looked at his companion. They were both pale; and there was an answering horror in their eyes.

"God forgive us, God forgive us," said Mr. Utterson.

But Mr. Enfield only nodded his head very seriously, and walked on once more in silence.

The Last Night

Mr. Utterson was sitting by his fireside one evening after dinner, when he was surprised to receive a visit from Poole.

"Bless me, Poole, what brings you here?" he cried; and then taking a second look at him, "What ails you?" he added; "is the doctor ill?"

"Mr. Utterson," said the man, "there is something wrong."

"Take a seat, and here is a glass of wine for you," said the lawyer. "Now, take your time, and tell me plainly what you want."

"You know the doctor's ways, sir," replied Poole, "and how he shuts himself up. Well, he's shut up again in the cabinet; and I don't like it, sir—I wish I may die if I like it. Mr. Utterson, sir, I'm afraid."

"Now, my good man," said the lawyer, "be explicit. What are you afraid of?"

"I've been afraid for about a week," returned Poole, doggedly disregarding the question, "and I can bear it no more."

The man's appearance amply bore out his words; his manner was altered for the worse; and except for the moment when he had first announced his terror, he had not once looked the lawyer in the face. Even now, he sat with the glass of wine untasted on his knee, and his eyes directed to a corner of the floor. "I can bear it no more," he repeated.

"Come," said the lawyer, "I see you have some good reason, Poole; I see there is something seriously amiss. Try to tell me what it is."

"I think there's been foul play," said Poole, hoarsely.

"Foul play!" cried the lawyer, a good deal frightened and rather inclined to be irritated in consequence. "What foul play? What does the man mean?"

"I daren't say, sir," was the answer; "but will you come along with me and see for yourself?"

Mr. Utterson's only answer was to rise and get his hat and great coat; but he observed with wonder the greatness of the relief that

appeared upon the butler's face, and perhaps with no less, that the wine was still untasted when he set it down to follow.

It was a wild, cold, seasonable night of March, with a pale moon, lying on her back as though the wind had tilted her, and a flying wrack of the most diaphanous and lawny[4] texture. The wind made talking difficult, and flecked the blood into the face. It seemed to have swept the streets unusually bare of passengers, besides; for Mr. Utterson thought he had never seen that part of London so deserted. He could have wished it otherwise; never in his life had he been conscious of so sharp a wish to see and touch his fellow-creatures; for struggle as he might, there was born in upon his mind a crushing anticipation of calamity. The square, when they got there, was all full of wind and dust, and the thin trees in the garden were lashing themselves along the railing. Poole, who had kept all the way a pace or two ahead, now pulled up in the middle of the pavement, and in spite of the biting weather, took off his hat and mopped his brow with a red pocket-handkerchief. But for all the hurry of his coming, these were not the dews of exertion that he wiped away, but the moisture of some strangling anguish; for his face was white and his voice, when he spoke, harsh and broken.

"Well, sir," he said, "here we are, and God grant there be nothing wrong."

"Amen, Poole," said the lawyer.

Thereupon the servant knocked in a very guarded manner; the door was opened on the chain; and a voice asked from within, "Is that you, Poole?"

"It's all right," said Poole. "Open the door."

The hall, when they entered it, was brightly lighted up; the fire was built high; and about the hearth the whole of the servants, men and women, stood huddled together like a flock of sheep. At the sight of Mr. Utterson, the housemaid broke into hysterical whimpering; and the cook, crying out "Bless God! it's Mr. Utterson," ran forward as if to take him in her arms.

"What, what? Are you all here?" said the lawyer peevishly. "Very irregular, very unseemly; your master would be far from pleased."

"They're all afraid," said Poole.

Blank silence followed, no one protesting; only the maid lifted up her voice and now wept loudly.

"Hold your tongue!" Poole said to her, with a ferocity of accent that testified to his own jangled nerves; and indeed, when the girl had so suddenly raised the note of her lamentation, they had all started and turned towards the inner door with faces of dreadful expectation. "And now," continued the butler, addressing the knife-boy, "reach me a candle, and we'll get this through hands[5] at once." And then he begged Mr. Utterson to follow him, and led the way to the back garden.

"Now, sir," said he, "you come as gently as you can. I want you to hear, and I don't want you to be heard. And see here, sir, if by any chance he was to ask you in, don't go."

Mr. Utterson's nerves, at this unlooked-for termination, gave a jerk that nearly threw him from his balance; but he recollected his courage and followed the butler into the laboratory building and through the surgical theatre, with its lumber[6] of crates and bottles, to the foot of the stair. Here Poole motioned him to stand on one side and listen; while he himself, setting down the candle and making a great and obvious call on his resolution, mounted the steps and knocked with a somewhat uncertain hand on the red baize of the cabinet door.

"Mr. Utterson, sir, asking to see you," he called; and even as he did so, once more violently signed to the lawyer to give ear.

A voice answered from within: "Tell him I cannot see anyone," it said complainingly.

"Thank you, sir," said Poole, with a note of something like triumph in his voice; and taking up his candle, he led Mr. Utterson back across the yard and into the great kitchen, where the fire was out and the beetles were leaping on the floor.

"Sir," he said, looking Mr. Utterson in the eyes, "was that my master's voice?"

"It seems much changed," replied the lawyer, very pale, but giving look for look.

"Changed? Well, yes, I think so," said the butler. "Have I been twenty years in this man's house, to be deceived about his voice? No, sir; master's made away with; he was made away with, eight days ago, when we heard him cry out upon the name of God; and *who's* in there instead of him, and *why* it stays there, is a thing that cries to Heaven, Mr. Utterson!"

"This is a very strange tale, Poole; this is rather a wild tale, my man," said Mr. Utterson, biting his finger. "Suppose it were as you suppose, supposing Dr. Jekyll to have been—well, murdered, what could induce the murderer to stay? That won't hold water; it doesn't commend itself to reason."

"Well, Mr. Utterson, you are a hard man to satisfy, but I'll do it yet," said Poole. "All this last week (you must know) him, or it, or whatever it is that lives in that cabinet, has been crying night and day for some sort of medicine and cannot get it to his mind. It was sometimes his way—the master's, that is—to write his orders on a sheet of paper and throw it on the stair. We've had nothing else this week back; nothing but papers, and a closed door, and the very meals left there to be smuggled in when nobody was looking. Well, sir, every day, ay, and twice and thrice in the same day, there have been orders and complaints, and I have been sent flying to all the wholesale chemists in town. Every time I brought the stuff back, there would be another paper telling me to return it, because it was not pure, and another order to a different firm. This drug is wanted bitter bad, sir, whatever for."

"Have you any of these papers?" asked Mr. Utterson.

Poole felt in his pocket and handed out a crumpled note, which the lawyer, bending nearer to the candle, carefully examined. Its contents ran thus: "Dr. Jekyll presents his compliments to Messrs. Maw. He assures them that their last sample is impure and quite useless for his present purpose. In the year 18—, Dr. J. purchased a somewhat large quantity from Messrs. M. He now begs them to search with the most sedulous care, and should any of the same quality be left, to forward it to him at once. Expense is no consideration. The importance of this to Dr. J. can hardly be

exaggerated." So far the letter had run composedly enough, but here with a sudden splutter of the pen, the writer's emotion had broken loose. "For God's sake," he had added, "find me some of the old."

"This is a strange note," said Mr. Utterson; and then sharply, "How do you come to have it open?"

"The man at Maw's was main angry, sir, and he threw it back to me like so much dirt," returned Poole.

"This is unquestionably the doctor's hand, do you know?" resumed the lawyer.

"I thought it looked like it," said the servant rather sulkily; and then, with another voice, "But what matters hand of write?" he said. "I've seen him!"

"Seen him?" repeated Mr. Utterson. "Well?"

"That's it!" said Poole. "It was this way. I came suddenly into the theatre from the garden. It seems he had slipped out to look for this drug or whatever it is; for the cabinet door was open, and there he was at the far end of the room digging among the crates. He looked up when I came in, gave a kind of cry, and whipped upstairs into the cabinet. It was but for one minute that I saw him, but the hair stood upon my head like quills. Sir, if that was my master, why had he a mask upon his face? If it was my master, why did he cry out like a rat, and run from me? I have served him long enough. And then . . ." The man paused and passed his hand over his face.

"These are all very strange circumstances," said Mr. Utterson, "but I think I begin to see daylight. Your master, Poole, is plainly seized with one of those maladies that both torture and deform the sufferer; hence, for aught I know, the alteration of his voice; hence the mask and the avoidance of his friends; hence his eagerness to find this drug, by means of which the poor soul retains some hope of ultimate recovery—God grant that he be not deceived! There is my explanation; it is sad enough, Poole, ay, and appalling to consider; but it is plain and natural, hangs well together, and delivers us from all exorbitant alarms."

"Sir," said the butler, turning to a sort of mottled pallor, "that thing was not my master, and there's the truth. My master"—here he

looked round him and began to whisper—"is a tall, fine build of a man, and this was more of a dwarf." Utterson attempted to protest. "O, sir," cried Poole, "do you think I do not know my master after twenty years? Do you think I do not know where his head comes to in the cabinet door, where I saw him every morning of my life? No, sir, that thing in the mask was never Dr. Jekyll—God knows what it was, but it was never Dr. Jekyll; and it is the belief of my heart that there was murder done."

"Poole," replied the lawyer, "if you say that, it will become my duty to make certain. Much as I desire to spare your master's feelings, much as I am puzzled by this note which seems to prove him to be still alive, I shall consider it my duty to break in that door."

"Ah, Mr. Utterson, that's talking!" cried the butler.

"And now comes the second question," resumed Utterson: "Who is going to do it?"

"Why, you and me," was the undaunted reply.

"That's very well said," returned the lawyer; "and whatever comes of it, I shall make it my business to see you are no loser."

"There is an axe in the theatre," continued Poole; "and you might take the kitchen poker for yourself."

The lawyer took that rude but weighty instrument into his hand, and balanced it. "Do you know, Poole," he said, looking up, "that you and I are about to place ourselves in a position of some peril?"

"You may say so, sir, indeed," returned the butler.

"It is well, then, that we should be frank," said the other. "We both think more than we have said; let us make a clean breast. This masked figure that you saw, did you recognise it?"

"Well, sir, it went so quick, and the creature was so doubled up, that I could hardly swear to that," was the answer. "But if you mean, was it Mr. Hyde?—why, yes, I think it was! You see, it was much of the same bigness; and it had the same quick, light way with it; and then who else could have got in by the laboratory door? You have not forgot, sir, that at the time of the murder he had still the key with him? But that's not all. I don't know, Mr. Utterson, if ever you met this Mr. Hyde?"

"Yes," said the lawyer, "I once spoke with him."

"Then you must know as well as the rest of us that there was something queer about that gentleman—something that gave a man a turn—I don't know rightly how to say it, sir, beyond this: that you felt it in your marrow kind of cold and thin."

"I own I felt something of what you describe," said Mr. Utterson.

"Quite so, sir," returned Poole. "Well, when that masked thing like a monkey jumped from among the chemicals and whipped into the cabinet, it went down my spine like ice. O, I know it's not evidence, Mr. Utterson; I'm book-learned enough for that; but a man has his feelings, and I give you my bible-word it was Mr. Hyde!"

"Ay, ay," said the lawyer. "My fears incline to the same point. Evil, I fear, founded—evil was sure to come—of that connection. Ay, truly, I believe you; I believe poor Harry is killed; and I believe his murderer (for what purpose, God alone can tell) is still lurking in his victim's room. Well, let our name be vengeance. Call Bradshaw."

The footman came at the summons, very white and nervous.

"Pull yourself together, Bradshaw," said the lawyer. "This suspense, I know, is telling upon all of you; but it is now our intention to make an end of it. Poole, here, and I are going to force our way into the cabinet. If all is well, my shoulders are broad enough to bear the blame. Meanwhile, lest anything should really be amiss, or any malefactor seek to escape by the back, you and the boy must go round the corner with a pair of good sticks and take your post at the laboratory door. We give you ten minutes, to get to your stations."

As Bradshaw left, the lawyer looked at his watch. "And now, Poole, let us get to ours," he said; and taking the poker under his arm, led the way into the yard. The scud[7] had banked over the moon, and it was now quite dark. The wind, which only broke in puffs and draughts into that deep well of building, tossed the light of the candle to and fro about their steps, until they came into the shelter of the theatre, where they sat down silently to wait. London hummed solemnly all around; but nearer at hand, the stillness was

only broken by the sounds of a footfall moving to and fro along the cabinet floor.

"So it will walk all day, sir," whispered Poole; "ay, and the better part of the night. Only when a new sample comes from the chemist, there's a bit of a break. Ah, it's an ill-conscience that's such an enemy to rest! Ah, sir, there's blood foully shed in every step of it! But hark again, a little closer—put your heart in your ears, Mr. Utterson, and tell me, is that the doctor's foot?"

The steps fell lightly and oddly, with a certain swing, for all they went so slowly; it was different indeed from the heavy creaking tread of Henry Jekyll. Utterson sighed. "Is there never anything else?" he asked.

Poole nodded. "Once," he said. "Once I heard it weeping!"

"Weeping? how that?" said the lawyer, conscious of a sudden chill of horror.

"Weeping like a woman or a lost soul," said the butler. "I came away with that upon my heart, that I could have wept too."

But now the ten minutes drew to an end. Poole disinterred the axe from under a stack of packing straw; the candle was set upon the nearest table to light them to the attack; and they drew near with bated breath to where that patient foot was still going up and down, up and down, in the quiet of the night.

"Jekyll," cried Utterson, with a loud voice, "I demand to see you." He paused a moment, but there came no reply. "I give you fair warning, our suspicions are aroused, and I must and shall see you," he resumed; "if not by fair means, then by foul—if not of your consent, then by brute force!"

"Utterson," said the voice, "for God's sake, have mercy!"

"Ah, that's not Jekyll's voice—it's Hyde's!" cried Utterson. "Down with the door, Poole!"

Poole swung the axe over his shoulder; the blow shook the building, and the red baize door leaped against the lock and hinges. A dismal screech, as of mere animal terror, rang from the cabinet. Up went the axe again, and again the panels crashed and the frame bounded; four times the blow fell; but the wood was tough and the

fittings were of excellent workmanship; and it was not until the fifth, that the lock burst in sunder and the wreck of the door fell inwards on the carpet.

The besiegers, appalled by their own riot and the stillness that had succeeded, stood back a little and peered in. There lay the cabinet before their eyes in the quiet lamplight, a good fire glowing and chattering on the hearth, the kettle singing its thin strain, a drawer or two open, papers neatly set forth on the business table, and nearer the fire, the things laid out for tea: the quietest room, you would have said, and, but for the glazed presses full of chemicals, the most commonplace that night in London.

Right in the midst there lay the body of a man sorely contorted and still twitching. They drew near on tip-toe, turned it on its back and beheld the face of Edward Hyde. He was dressed in clothes far too large for him, clothes of the doctor's bigness; the cords of his face still moved with a semblance of life, but life was quite gone: and by the crushed phial in the hand and the strong smell of kernels[8] that hung upon the air, Utterson knew that he was looking on the body of a self-destroyer.

"We have come too late," he said sternly, "whether to save or punish. Hyde is gone to his account; and it only remains for us to find the body of your master."

The far greater proportion of the building was occupied by the theatre, which filled almost the whole ground story and was lighted from above, and by the cabinet, which formed an upper story at one end and looked upon the court. A corridor joined the theatre to the door on the by-street; and with this the cabinet communicated separately by a second flight of stairs. There were besides a few dark closets and a spacious cellar. All these they now thoroughly examined. Each closet needed but a glance, for all were empty, and all, by the dust that fell from their doors, had stood long unopened. The cellar, indeed, was filled with crazy lumber,[9] mostly dating from the times of the surgeon who was Jekyll's predecessor; but even as they opened the door they were advertised of the uselessness of further search, by the fall of a perfect mat of cobweb which had for

years sealed up the entrance. Nowhere was there any trace of Henry Jekyll, dead or alive.

Poole stamped on the flags of the corridor. “He must be buried here,” he said, hearkening to the sound.

“Or he may have fled,” said Utterson, and he turned to examine the door in the by-street. It was locked; and lying near by on the flags, they found the key, already stained with rust.

“This does not look like use,” observed the lawyer.

“Use!” echoed Poole. “Do you not see, sir, it is broken? much as if a man had stamped on it.”

“Ay,” continued Utterson, “and the fractures, too, are rusty.” The two men looked at each other with a scare. “This is beyond me, Poole,” said the lawyer. “Let us go back to the cabinet.”

They mounted the stair in silence, and still with an occasional awestruck glance at the dead body, proceeded more thoroughly to examine the contents of the cabinet. At one table, there were traces of chemical work, various measured heaps of some white salt being laid on glass saucers, as though for an experiment in which the unhappy man had been prevented.

“That is the same drug that I was always bringing him,” said Poole; and even as he spoke, the kettle with a startling noise boiled over.

This brought them to the fireside, where the easy-chair was drawn cosily up, and the tea things stood ready to the sitter’s elbow, the very sugar in the cup. There were several books on a shelf; one lay beside the tea things open, and Utterson was amazed to find it a copy of a pious work, for which Jekyll had several times expressed a great esteem, annotated, in his own hand, with startling blasphemies.

Next, in the course of their review of the chamber, the searchers came to the cheval-glass, into whose depths they looked with an involuntary horror. But it was so turned as to show them nothing but the rosy glow playing on the roof, the fire sparkling in a hundred repetitions along the glazed front of the presses, and their own pale and fearful countenances stooping to look in.

"This glass have seen some strange things, sir," whispered Poole.

"And surely none stranger than itself," echoed the lawyer in the same tones. "For what did Jekyll"—he caught himself up at the word with a start, and then conquering the weakness—"what could Jekyll want with it?" he said.

"You may say that!" said Poole.

Next they turned to the business table. On the desk, among the neat array of papers, a large envelope was uppermost, and bore, in the doctor's hand, the name of Mr. Utterson. The lawyer unsealed it, and several enclosures fell to the floor. The first was a will, drawn in the same eccentric terms as the one which he had returned six months before, to serve as a testament in case of death and as a deed of gift in case of disappearance; but in place of the name of Edward Hyde, the lawyer, with indescribable amazement, read the name of Gabriel John Utterson. He looked at Poole, and then back at the paper, and last of all at the dead malefactor stretched upon the carpet.

"My head goes round," he said. "He has been all these days in possession; he had no cause to like me; he must have raged to see himself displaced; and he has not destroyed this document."

He caught up the next paper; it was a brief note in the doctor's hand and dated at the top. "O Poole!" the lawyer cried, "he was alive and here this day. He cannot have been disposed of in so short a space; he must be still alive, he must have fled! And then, why fled? and how? and in that case, can we venture to declare this suicide? O, we must be careful. I foresee that we may yet involve your master in some dire catastrophe."

"Why don't you read it, sir?" asked Poole.

"Because I fear," replied the lawyer solemnly. "God grant I have no cause for it!" And with that he brought the paper to his eyes and read as follows:

"My Dear Utterson,—When this shall fall into your hands, I shall have disappeared, under what circumstances I have not the penetration to foresee, but my instinct and all the circumstances of

my nameless situation tell me that the end is sure and must be early. Go then, and first read the narrative which Lanyon warned me he was to place in your hands; and if you care to hear more, turn to the confession of

"Your unworthy and unhappy friend,

"HENRY JEKYLL."

"There was a third enclosure?" asked Utterson.

"Here, sir," said Poole, and gave into his hands a considerable packet sealed in several places.

The lawyer put it in his pocket. "I would say nothing of this paper. If your master has fled or is dead, we may at least save his credit. It is now ten; I must go home and read these documents in quiet; but I shall be back before midnight, when we shall send for the police."

They went out, locking the door of the theatre behind them; and Utterson, once more leaving the servants gathered about the fire in the hall, trudged back to his office to read the two narratives in which this mystery was now to be explained.

Endnotes

- Note 4: Of fine linen. "Wrack": that is, rack, a mass of high clouds driven by the wind.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: We'll deal with this.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Random accumulation of disused objects.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Loose clouds driven rapidly before the wind.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That is, pits: cyanide smells of bitter almond or of peach pits.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: See p. 762, n. 6.Return to reference 9

Dr. Lanyon's Narrative

On the ninth of January, now four days ago, I received by the evening delivery a registered envelope, addressed in the hand of my colleague and old school-companion, Henry Jekyll. I was a good deal surprised by this; for we were by no means in the habit of correspondence; I had seen the man, dined with him, indeed, the night before; and I could imagine nothing in our intercourse that should justify formality of registration. The contents increased my wonder; for this is how the letter ran:

"10th December,[1] 18—

"DEAR LANYON,—You are one of my oldest friends; and although we may have differed at times on scientific questions, I cannot remember, at least on my side, any break in our affection. There was never a day when, if you had said to me, 'Jekyll, my life, my honour, my reason, depend upon you,' I would not have sacrificed my left hand to help you. Lanyon, my life, my honour, my reason, are all at your mercy; if you fail me to-night I am lost. You might suppose, after this preface, that I am going to ask you for something dishonourable to grant. Judge for yourself.

"I want you to postpone all other engagements for to-night —ay, even if you were summoned to the bedside of an emperor; to take a cab, unless your carriage should be actually at the door; and with this letter in your hand for consultation, to drive straight to my house. Poole, my butler, has his orders; you will find him waiting your arrival with a locksmith. The door of my cabinet is then to be forced: and you are to go in alone; to open the glazed press (letter E) on the left hand, breaking the lock if it be shut; and to draw out, *with all its contents as they stand*, the fourth drawer from the top or (which is the same thing) the third from the bottom. In my extreme distress of mind, I have a morbid fear of misdirecting you; but even if I am in error, you may know the

right drawer by its contents: some powders, a phial and a paper book. This drawer I beg of you to carry back with you to Cavendish Square exactly as it stands.

"That is the first part of the service: now for the second. You should be back, if you set out at once on the receipt of this, long before midnight; but I will leave you that amount of margin, not only in the fear of one of those obstacles that can neither be prevented nor foreseen, but because an hour when your servants are in bed is to be preferred for what will then remain to do. At midnight, then, I have to ask you to be alone in your consulting room, to admit with your own hand into the house a man who will present himself in my name, and to place in his hands the drawer that you will have brought with you from my cabinet. Then you will have played your part and earned my gratitude completely. Five minutes afterwards, if you insist upon an explanation, you will have understood that these arrangements are of capital importance; and that by the neglect of one of them, fantastic as they must appear, you might have charged your conscience with my death or the shipwreck of my reason.

"Confident as I am that you will not trifle with this appeal, my heart sinks and my hand trembles at the bare thought of such a possibility. Think of me at this hour, in a strange place, labouring under a blackness of distress that no fancy can exaggerate, and yet well aware that, if you will but punctually serve me, my troubles will roll away like a story that is told. Serve me, my dear Lanyon, and save

"Your friend,
H. J."

"P. S.—I had already sealed this up when a fresh terror struck upon my soul. It is possible that the post-office may fail me, and this letter not come into your hands until to-morrow morning. In that case, dear Lanyon, do my errand when it shall be most convenient for you in the course of the day; and once more expect my messenger at midnight. It

> may then already be too late; and if that night passes without event, you will know that you have seen the last of Henry Jekyll.”

Upon the reading of this letter, I made sure my colleague was insane; but till that was proved beyond the possibility of doubt, I felt bound to do as he requested. The less I understood of this farrago[2] the less I was in a position to judge of its importance; and an appeal so worded could not be set aside without a grave responsibility. I rose accordingly from table, got into a hansom, and drove straight to Jekyll’s house. The butler was awaiting my arrival; he had received by the same post as mine a registered letter of instruction, and had sent at once for a locksmith and a carpenter. The tradesmen came while we were yet speaking; and we moved in a body to old Dr. Denman’s surgical theatre, from which (as you are doubtless aware) Jekyll’s private cabinet is most conveniently entered. The door was very strong, the lock excellent; the carpenter avowed he would have great trouble and have to do much damage, if force were to be used; and the locksmith was near despair. But this last was a handy fellow, and after two hours’ work, the door stood open. The press marked E was unlocked; and I took out the drawer, had it filled up with straw and tied in a sheet, and returned with it to Cavendish Square.

Here I proceeded to examine its contents. The powders were neatly enough made up, but not with the nicety of the dispensing chemist; so that it was plain they were of Jekyll’s private manufacture: and when I opened one of the wrappers I found what seemed to me a simple crystalline salt of a white colour. The phial, to which I next turned my attention, might have been about half full of a blood-red liquor, which was highly pungent to the sense of smell and seemed to me to contain phosphorus and some volatile ether. At the other ingredients I could make no guess. The book was an ordinary version book[3] and contained little but a series of dates. These covered a period of many years, but I observed that the entries ceased nearly a year ago and quite abruptly. Here and there

a brief remark was appended to a date, usually no more than a single word: "double" occurring perhaps six times in a total of several hundred entries; and once very early in the list and followed by several marks of exclamation, "total failure!!!" All this, though it whetted my curiosity, told me little that was definite. Here were a phial of some tincture, a paper of some salt, and the record of a series of experiments that had led (like too many of Jekyll's investigations) to no end of practical usefulness. How could the presence of these articles in my house affect either the honour, the sanity, or the life of my flighty colleague? If his messenger could go to one place, why could he not go to another? And even granting some impediment, why was this gentleman to be received by me in secret? The more I reflected the more convinced I grew that I was dealing with a case of cerebral disease; and though I dismissed my servants to bed, I loaded an old revolver, that I might be found in some posture of self-defence.

Twelve o'clock had scarce rung out over London, ere the knocker sounded very gently on the door. I went myself at the summons, and found a small man crouching against the pillars of the portico.

"Are you come from Dr. Jekyll?" I asked.

He told me "yes" by a constrained gesture; and when I had bidden him enter, he did not obey me without a searching backward glance into the darkness of the square. There was a policeman not far off, advancing with his bull's eye[4] open; and at the sight, I thought my visitor started and made greater haste.

These particulars struck me, I confess, disagreeably; and as I followed him into the bright light of the consulting room, I kept my hand ready on my weapon. Here, at last, I had a chance of clearly seeing him. I had never set eyes on him before, so much was certain. He was small, as I have said; I was struck besides with the shocking expression of his face, with his remarkable combination of great muscular activity and great apparent debility of constitution, and—last but not least—with the odd, subjective disturbance caused by his neighbourhood. This bore some resemblance to incipient rigour,[5] and was accompanied by a marked sinking of the pulse. At

the time, I set it down to some idiosyncratic, personal distaste, and merely wondered at the acuteness of the symptoms; but I have since had reason to believe the cause to lie much deeper in the nature of man, and to turn on some nobler hinge than the principle of hatred.

This person (who had thus, from the first moment of his entrance, struck in me what I can only describe as a disgustful curiosity) was dressed in a fashion that would have made an ordinary person laughable; his clothes, that is to say, although they were of rich and sober fabric, were enormously too large for him in every measurement—the trousers hanging on his legs and rolled up to keep them from the ground, the waist of the coat below his haunches, and the collar sprawling wide upon his shoulders. Strange to relate, this ludicrous accoutrement was far from moving me to laughter. Rather, as there was something abnormal and misbegotten in the very essence of the creature that now faced me—something seizing,[6] surprising and revolting—this fresh disparity seemed but to fit in with and to reinforce it; so that to my interest in the man's nature and character, there was added a curiosity as to his origin, his life, his fortune and status in the world.

These observations, though they have taken so great a space to be set down in, were yet the work of a few seconds. My visitor was, indeed, on fire with sombre excitement.

"Have you got it?" he cried. "Have you got it?" And so lively was his impatience that he even laid his hand upon my arm and sought to shake me.

I put him back, conscious at his touch of a certain icy pang along my blood. "Come, sir," said I. "You forget that I have not yet the pleasure of your acquaintance. Be seated, if you please." And I showed him an example, and sat down myself in my customary seat and with as fair an imitation of my ordinary manner to a patient, as the lateness of the hour, the nature of my preoccupations, and the horror I had of my visitor, would suffer me to muster.

"I beg your pardon, Dr. Lanyon," he replied civilly enough. "What you say is very well founded; and my impatience has shown its heels

to my politeness. I come here at the instance[7] of your colleague, Dr. Henry Jekyll, on a piece of business of some moment; and I understood . . .” He paused and put his hand to his throat, and I could see, in spite of his collected manner, that he was wrestling against the approaches of the hysteria—“I understood, a drawer . . .”

But here I took pity on my visitor’s suspense, and some perhaps on my own growing curiosity.

“There it is, sir,” said I, pointing to the drawer, where it lay on the floor behind a table and still covered with the sheet.

He sprang to it, and then paused, and laid his hand upon his heart: I could hear his teeth grate with the convulsive action of his jaws; and his face was so ghastly to see that I grew alarmed both for his life and reason.

“Compose yourself,” said I.

He turned a dreadful smile to me, and as if with the decision of despair, plucked away the sheet. At sight of the contents, he uttered one loud sob of such immense relief that I sat petrified. And the next moment, in a voice that was already fairly well under control, “Have you a graduated[8] glass?” he asked.

I rose from my place with something of an effort and gave him what he asked.

He thanked me with a smiling nod, measured out a few minims[9] of the red tincture and added one of the powders. The mixture, which was at first of a reddish hue, began, in proportion as the crystals melted, to brighten in colour, to effervesce audibly, and to throw off small fumes of vapour. Suddenly and at the same moment, the ebullition[1] ceased and the compound changed to a dark purple, which faded again more slowly to a watery green. My visitor, who had watched these metamorphoses with a keen eye, smiled, set down the glass upon the table, and then turned and looked upon me with an air of scrutiny.

“And now,” said he, “to settle what remains. Will you be wise? will you be guided? will you suffer me to take this glass in my hand

and to go forth from your house without further parley? or has the greed of curiosity too much command of you? Think before you answer, for it shall be done as you decide. As you decide, you shall be left as you were before, and neither richer nor wiser, unless the sense of service rendered to a man in mortal distress may be counted as a kind of riches of the soul. Or, if you shall so prefer to choose, a new province of knowledge and new avenues to fame and power shall be laid open to you, here, in this room, upon the instant; and your sight shall be blasted by a prodigy to stagger the unbelief of Satan."

"Sir," said I, affecting a coolness that I was far from truly possessing, "you speak enigmas, and you will perhaps not wonder that I hear you with no very strong impression of belief. But I have gone too far in the way of inexplicable services to pause before I see the end."

"It is well," replied my visitor. "Lanyon, you remember your vows: what follows is under the seal of our profession. And now, you who have so long been bound to the most narrow and material views, you who have denied the virtue of transcendental medicine, you who have derided your superiors—behold!"

He put the glass to his lips and drank at one gulp. A cry followed; he reeled, staggered, clutched at the table and held on, staring with injected[2] eyes, gasping with open mouth; and as I looked there came, I thought, a change—he seemed to swell—his face became suddenly black and the features seemed to melt and alter—and the next moment, I had sprung to my feet and leaped back against the wall, my arm raised to shield me from that prodigy, my mind submerged in terror.

"O God!" I screamed, and "O God!" again and again; for there before my eyes—pale and shaken, and half fainting, and groping before him with his hands, like a man restored from death—there stood Henry Jekyll!

What he told me in the next hour, I cannot bring my mind to set on paper. I saw what I saw, I heard what I heard, and my soul sickened at it; and yet now when that sight has faded from my eyes,

I ask myself if I believe it, and I cannot answer. My life is shaken to its roots; sleep has left me; the deadliest terror sits by me at all hours of the day and night; I feel that my days are numbered, and that I must die; and yet I shall die incredulous. As for the moral turpitude that man unveiled to me, even with tears of penitence, I cannot, even in memory, dwell on it without a start of horror. I will say but one thing, Utterson, and that (if you can bring your mind to credit it) will be more than enough. The creature who crept into my house that night was, on Jekyll's own confession, known by the name of Hyde and hunted for in every corner of the land as the murderer of Carew.

HASTIE LANYON.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Stevenson's own error; the first sentence of *Dr. Lanyon's Narrative* makes it clear that the letter should be dated "9th January." Literary critic Richard Dury attributes the slip to the following circumstances: Stevenson had originally wanted to publish his story in time for the Christmas market and align Lanyon's witnessing of Hyde's transformation with December, a time for mysterious events. Later he forgot to change this detail.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Mixture.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: School notebook used to record translations.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Sliding door of his lantern.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Sudden chill.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Powerfully impressive.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Request.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Marked with lines to indicate quantities.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Drops (a minim is a liquid measure equal to 1/480th of an ounce).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Bubbling.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Swollen.Return to reference 2

Henry Jekyll's Full Statement of the Case

I was born in the year 18— to a large fortune, endowed besides with excellent parts,[3] inclined by nature to industry, fond of the respect of the wise and good among my fellow-men, and thus, as might have been supposed, with every guarantee of an honourable and distinguished future. And indeed the worst of my faults was a certain impatient gaiety of disposition, such as has made the happiness of many, but such as I found it hard to reconcile with my imperious desire to carry my head high, and wear a more than commonly grave countenance before the public. Hence it came about that I concealed my pleasures; and that when I reached years of reflection, and began to look round me and take stock of my progress and position in the world, I stood already committed to a profound duplicity of life. Many a man would have even blazoned such irregularities as I was guilty of; but from the high views that I had set before me, I regarded and hid them with an almost morbid sense of shame. It was thus rather the exacting nature of my aspirations than any particular degradation in my faults, that made me what I was, and, with even a deeper trench than in the majority of men, severed in me those provinces of good and ill which divide and compound man's dual nature. In this case, I was driven to reflect deeply and inveterately on that hard law of life, which lies at the root of religion and is one of the most plentiful springs of distress. Though so profound a double-dealer, I was in no sense a hypocrite; both sides of me were in dead earnest; I was no more myself when I laid aside restraint and plunged in shame, than when I laboured, in the eye of day, at the furtherance of knowledge or the relief of sorrow and suffering. And it chanced that the direction of my scientific studies, which led wholly towards the mystic and the transcendental, reacted and shed a strong light on this consciousness of the perennial war among my members. With every day, and from both sides of my intelligence, the moral and the intellectual, I thus drew steadily nearer to that truth, by whose partial discovery I have been doomed to such a dreadful shipwreck:

that man is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point. Others will follow, others will outstrip me on the same lines; and I hazard the guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens. I for my part, from the nature of my life, advanced infallibly in one direction and in one direction only. It was on the moral side, and in my own person, that I learned to recognise the thorough and primitive duality of man; I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both; and from an early date, even before the course of my scientific discoveries had begun to suggest the most naked possibility of such a miracle, I had learned to dwell with pleasure, as a beloved day-dream, on the thought of the separation of these elements. If each, I told myself, could but be housed in separate identities, life would be relieved of all that was unbearable; the unjust might go his way, delivered from the aspirations and remorse of his more upright twin; and the just could walk steadfastly and securely on his upward path, doing the good things in which he found his pleasure, and no longer exposed to disgrace and penitence by the hands of this extraneous evil. It was the curse of mankind that these incongruous faggots[4] were thus bound together—that in the agonised womb of consciousness, these polar twins should be continuously struggling. How, then, were they dissociated?

I was so far in my reflections when, as I have said, a side light began to shine upon the subject from the laboratory table. I began to perceive more deeply than it has ever yet been stated, the trembling immateriality, the mist-like transience, of this seemingly so solid body in which we walk attired. Certain agents I found to have the power to shake and to pluck back that fleshly vestment, even as a wind might toss the curtains of a pavilion. For two good reasons, I will not enter deeply into this scientific branch of my confession. First, because I have been made to learn that the doom and burthen of our life is bound forever on man’s shoulders, and when the

attempt is made to cast it off, it but returns upon us with more unfamiliar and more awful pressure. Second, because, as my narrative will make, alas! too evident, my discoveries were incomplete. Enough, then, that I not only recognised my natural body for the mere aura and effulgence of certain of the powers that made up my spirit, but managed to compound a drug by which these powers should be dethroned from their supremacy, and a second form and countenance substituted, none the less natural to me because they were the expression, and bore the stamp, of lower elements in my soul.

I hesitated long before I put this theory to the test of practice. I knew well that I risked death; for any drug that so potently controlled and shook the very fortress of identity, might by the least scruple[5] of an overdose or at the least inopportunity in the moment of exhibition, utterly blot out that immaterial tabernacle which I looked to it to change. But the temptation of a discovery so singular and profound, at last overcame the suggestions of alarm. I had long since prepared my tincture; I purchased at once, from a firm of wholesale chemists, a large quantity of a particular salt which I knew, from my experiments, to be the last ingredient required; and late one accursed night, I compounded the elements, watched them boil and smoke together in the glass, and when the ebullition had subsided, with a strong glow of courage, drank off the potion.

The most racking pangs succeeded: a grinding in the bones, deadly nausea, and a horror of the spirit that cannot be exceeded at the hour of birth or death. Then these agonies began swiftly to subside, and I came to myself as if out of a great sickness. There was something strange in my sensations, something indescribably new and, from its very novelty, incredibly sweet. I felt younger, lighter, happier in body; within I was conscious of a heady recklessness, a current of disordered sensual images running like a mill race[6] in my fancy, a solution of the bonds of obligation, an unknown but not an innocent freedom of the soul. I knew myself, at the first breath of this new life, to be more wicked, tenfold more wicked, sold a slave to my original evil; and the thought, in that

moment, braced and delighted me like wine. I stretched out my hands, exulting in the freshness of these sensations; and in the act, I was suddenly aware that I had lost in stature.

There was no mirror, at that date, in my room; that which stands beside me as I write, was brought there later on and for the very purpose of these transformations. The night, however, was far gone into the morning—the morning, black as it was, was nearly ripe for the conception of the day—the inmates of my house were locked in the most rigorous hours of slumber; and I determined, flushed as I was with hope and triumph, to venture in my new shape as far as to my bedroom. I crossed the yard, wherein the constellations looked down upon me, I could have thought, with wonder, the first creature of that sort that their unsleeping vigilance had yet disclosed to them; I stole through the corridors, a stranger in my own house; and coming to my room, I saw for the first time the appearance of Edward Hyde.

I must here speak by theory alone, saying not that which I know, but that which I suppose to be most probable. The evil side of my nature, to which I had now transferred the stamping efficacy, was less robust and less developed than the good which I had just deposed. Again, in the course of my life, which had been, after all, nine-tenths a life of effort, virtue and control, it had been much less exercised and much less exhausted. And hence, as I think, it came about that Edward Hyde was so much smaller, slighter and younger than Henry Jekyll. Even as good shone upon the countenance of the one, evil was written broadly and plainly on the face of the other. Evil besides (which I must still believe to be the lethal side of man) had left on that body an imprint of deformity and decay. And yet when I looked upon that ugly idol in the glass, I was conscious of no repugnance, rather of a leap of welcome. This, too, was myself. It seemed natural and human. In my eyes it bore a livelier image of the spirit, it seemed more express and single, than the imperfect and divided countenance I had been hitherto accustomed to call mine. And in so far I was doubtless right. I have observed that when I wore the semblance of Edward Hyde, none could come near to me

at first without a visible misgiving of the flesh. This, as I take it, was because all human beings, as we meet them, are commingled out of good and evil: and Edward Hyde, alone in the ranks of mankind, was pure evil.

I lingered but a moment at the mirror: the second and conclusive experiment had yet to be attempted; it yet remained to be seen if I had lost my identity beyond redemption and must flee before daylight from a house that was no longer mine; and hurrying back to my cabinet, I once more prepared and drank the cup, once more suffered the pangs of dissolution, and came to myself once more with the character, the stature and the face of Henry Jekyll.

That night I had come to the fatal cross roads. Had I approached my discovery in a more noble spirit, had I risked the experiment while under the empire of generous or pious aspirations, all must have been otherwise, and from these agonies of death and birth, I had come forth an angel instead of a fiend. The drug had no discriminating action; it was neither diabolical nor divine; it but shook the doors of the prison-house of my disposition; and like the captives of Philippi, that which stood within ran forth.[7] At that time my virtue slumbered; my evil, kept awake by ambition, was alert and swift to seize the occasion; and the thing that was projected was Edward Hyde. Hence, although I had now two characters as well as two appearances, one was wholly evil, and the other was still the old Henry Jekyll, that incongruous compound of whose reformation and improvement I had already learned to despair. The movement was thus wholly towards the worse.

Even at that time, I had not yet conquered my aversion to the dryness of a life of study. I would still be merrily disposed at times; and as my pleasures were (to say the least) undignified, and I was not only well known and highly considered, but growing towards the elderly man, this incoherency of my life was daily growing more unwelcome. It was on this side that my new power tempted me until I fell in slavery. I had but to drink the cup, to doff at once the body of the noted professor, and to assume, like a thick cloak, that of Edward Hyde. I smiled at the notion; it seemed to me at the time to

be humorous; and I made my preparations with the most studious care. I took and furnished that house in Soho, to which Hyde was tracked by the police; and engaged as housekeeper a creature whom I well knew to be silent and unscrupulous. On the other side, I announced to my servants that a Mr. Hyde (whom I described) was to have full liberty and power about my house in the square; and to parry mishaps, I even called and made myself a familiar object, in my second character. I next drew up that will to which you so much objected; so that if anything befell me in the person of Dr. Jekyll, I could enter on that of Edward Hyde without pecuniary loss. And thus fortified, as I supposed, on every side, I began to profit by the strange immunities of my position.

Men have before hired bravos[8] to transact their crimes, while their own person and reputation sat under shelter. I was the first that ever did so for his pleasures. I was the first that could thus plod in the public eye with a load of genial respectability, and in a moment, like a schoolboy, strip off these lendings[9] and spring headlong into the sea of liberty. But for me, in my impenetrable mantle, the safety was complete. Think of it—I did not even exist! Let me but escape into my laboratory door, give me but a second or two to mix and swallow the draught that I had always standing ready; and whatever he had done, Edward Hyde would pass away like the stain of breath upon a mirror; and there in his stead, quietly at home, trimming the midnight lamp in his study, a man who could afford to laugh at suspicion, would be Henry Jekyll.

The pleasures which I made haste to seek in my disguise were, as I have said, undignified; I would scarce use a harder term. But in the hands of Edward Hyde, they soon began to turn towards the monstrous. When I would come back from these excursions, I was often plunged into a kind of wonder at my vicarious depravity. This familiar[1] that I called out of my own soul, and sent forth alone to do his good pleasure, was a being inherently malign and villainous; his every act and thought centered on self; drinking pleasure with bestial avidity from any degree of torture to another; relentless like a man of stone. Henry Jekyll stood at times aghast before the acts of

Edward Hyde; but the situation was apart from ordinary laws, and insidiously relaxed the grasp of conscience. It was Hyde, after all, and Hyde alone, that was guilty. Jekyll was no worse; he woke again to his good qualities seemingly unimpaired; he would even make haste, where it was possible, to undo the evil done by Hyde. And thus his conscience slumbered.

Into the details of the infamy at which I thus connived (for even now I can scarce grant that I committed it) I have no design of entering; I mean but to point out the warnings and the successive steps with which my chastisement approached. I met with one accident which, as it brought on no consequence, I shall no more than mention. An act of cruelty to a child aroused against me the anger of a passer-by, whom I recognised the other day in the person of your kinsman; the doctor and the child's family joined him; there were moments when I feared for my life; and at last, in order to pacify their too just resentment, Edward Hyde had to bring them to the door, and pay them in a cheque drawn in the name of Henry Jekyll. But this danger was easily eliminated from the future, by opening an account at another bank in the name of Edward Hyde himself; and when, by sloping my own hand backward, I had supplied my double with a signature, I thought I sat beyond the reach of fate.

Some two months before the murder of Sir Danvers, I had been out for one of my adventures, had returned at a late hour, and woke the next day in bed with somewhat odd sensations. It was in vain I looked about me; in vain I saw the decent furniture and tall proportions of my room in the square; in vain that I recognised the pattern of the bed curtains and the design of the mahogany frame; something still kept insisting that I was not where I was, that I had not wakened where I seemed to be, but in the little room in Soho where I was accustomed to sleep in the body of Edward Hyde. I smiled to myself, and, in my psychological way began lazily to inquire into the elements of this illusion, occasionally, even as I did so, dropping back into a comfortable morning doze. I was still so engaged when, in one of my more wakeful moments, my eyes fell

upon my hand. Now the hand of Henry Jekyll (as you have often remarked) was professional in shape and size: it was large, firm, white and comely. But the hand which I now saw, clearly enough, in the yellow light of a mid-London morning, lying half shut on the bed clothes, was lean, corded, knuckly, of a dusky pallor and thickly shaded with a swart[2] growth of hair. It was the hand of Edward Hyde.

I must have stared upon it for near half a minute, sunk as I was in the mere stupidity of wonder, before terror woke up in my breast as sudden and startling as the crash of cymbals; and bounding from my bed, I rushed to the mirror. At the sight that met my eyes, my blood was changed into something exquisitely thin and icy. Yes, I had gone to bed Henry Jekyll, I had awakened Edward Hyde. How was this to be explained? I asked myself; and then, with another bound of terror—how was it to be remedied? It was well on in the morning; the servants were up; all my drugs were in the cabinet—a long journey down two pair of stairs, through the back passage, across the open court and through the anatomical theatre, from where I was then standing horror-struck. It might indeed be possible to cover my face; but of what use was that, when I was unable to conceal the alteration in my stature? And then with an overpowering sweetness of relief, it came back upon my mind that the servants were already used to the coming and going of my second self. I had soon dressed, as well as I was able, in clothes of my own size: had soon passed through the house, where Bradshaw stared and drew back at seeing Mr. Hyde at such an hour and in such a strange array; and ten minutes later, Dr. Jekyll had returned to his own shape and was sitting down, with a darkened brow, to make a feint of breakfasting.

Small indeed was my appetite. This inexplicable incident, this reversal of my previous experience, seemed, like the Babylonian finger on the wall,[3] to be spelling out the letters of my judgment; and I began to reflect more seriously than ever before on the issues and possibilities of my double existence. That part of me which I had the power of projecting, had lately been much exercised and

nourished; it had seemed to me of late as though the body of Edward Hyde had grown in stature, as though (when I wore that form) I were conscious of a more generous tide of blood; and I began to spy a danger that, if this were much prolonged, the balance of my nature might be permanently overthrown, the power of voluntary change be forfeited, and the character of Edward Hyde become irrevocably mine. The power of the drug had not been always equally displayed. Once, very early in my career, it had totally failed me; since then I had been obliged on more than one occasion to double, and once, with infinite risk of death, to treble the amount; and these rare uncertainties had cast hitherto the sole shadow on my contentment. Now, however, and in the light of that morning's accident, I was led to remark that whereas, in the beginning, the difficulty had been to throw off the body of Jekyll, it had of late gradually but decidedly transferred itself to the other side. All things therefore seemed to point to this: that I was slowly losing hold of my original and better self, and becoming slowly incorporated with my second and worse.

Between these two, I now felt I had to choose. My two natures had memory in common, but all other faculties were most unequally shared between them. Jekyll (who was composite) now with the most sensitive apprehensions, now with a greedy gusto, projected and shared in the pleasures and adventures of Hyde; but Hyde was indifferent to Jekyll, or but remembered him as the mountain bandit remembers the cavern in which he conceals himself from pursuit. Jekyll had more than a father's interest; Hyde had more than a son's indifference. To cast in my lot with Jekyll, was to die to those appetites which I had long secretly indulged and had of late begun to pamper. To cast it in with Hyde, was to die to a thousand interests and aspirations, and to become, at a blow and forever, despised and friendless. The bargain might appear unequal; but there was still another consideration in the scales; for while Jekyll would suffer smartingly in the fires of abstinence, Hyde would be not even conscious of all that he had lost. Strange as my circumstances were, the terms of this debate are as old and commonplace as man; much

the same inducements and alarms cast the die for any tempted and trembling sinner; and it fell out with me, as it falls with so vast a majority of my fellows, that I chose the better part and was found wanting in the strength to keep to it.

Yes, I preferred the elderly and discontented doctor, surrounded by friends and cherishing honest hopes; and bade a resolute farewell to the liberty, the comparative youth, the light step, leaping impulses and secret pleasures, that I had enjoyed in the disguise of Hyde. I made this choice perhaps with some unconscious reservation, for I neither gave up the house in Soho, nor destroyed the clothes of Edward Hyde, which still lay ready in my cabinet. For two months, however, I was true to my determination; for two months I led a life of such severity as I had never before attained to, and enjoyed the compensations of an approving conscience. But time began at last to obliterate the freshness of my alarm; the praises of conscience began to grow into a thing of course; I began to be tortured with throes and longings, as of Hyde struggling after freedom; and at last, in an hour of moral weakness, I once again compounded and swallowed the transforming draught.

I do not suppose that, when a drunkard reasons with himself upon his vice, he is once out of five hundred times affected by the dangers that he runs through his brutish, physical insensibility; neither had I, long as I had considered my position, made enough allowance for the complete moral insensibility and insensate readiness to evil, which were the leading characters of Edward Hyde. Yet it was by these that I was punished. My devil had been long caged, he came out roaring. I was conscious, even when I took the draught, of a more unbridled, a more furious propensity to ill. It must have been this, I suppose, that stirred in my soul that tempest of impatience with which I listened to the civilities of my unhappy victim; I declare, at least, before God, no man morally sane could have been guilty of that crime upon so pitiful a provocation; and that I struck in no more reasonable spirit than that in which a sick child may break a plaything. But I had voluntarily stripped myself of all those balancing instincts by which even the worst of us continues to

walk with some degree of steadiness among temptations; and in my case, to be tempted, however slightly, was to fall.

Instantly the spirit of hell awoke in me and raged. With a transport of glee, I mauled the unresisting body, tasting delight from every blow; and it was not till weariness had begun to succeed, that I was suddenly, in the top fit of my delirium, struck through the heart by a cold thrill of terror. A mist dispersed; I saw my life to be forfeit; and fled from the scene of these excesses, at once glorifying and trembling, my lust of evil gratified and stimulated, my love of life screwed to the topmost peg.[4] I ran to the house in Soho, and (to make assurance doubly sure) destroyed my papers; thence I set out through the lamplit streets, in the same divided ecstasy of mind, gloating on my crime, light-headedly devising others in the future, and yet still hastening and still hearkening in my wake for the steps of the avenger. Hyde had a song upon his lips as he compounded the draught, and as he drank it, pledged[5] the dead man. The pangs of transformation had not done tearing him, before Henry Jekyll, with streaming tears of gratitude and remorse, had fallen upon his knees and lifted his clasped hands to God. The veil of self-indulgence was rent from head to foot.[6] I saw my life as a whole: I followed it up from the days of childhood, when I had walked with my father's hand, and through the self-denying toils of my professional life, to arrive again and again, with the same sense of unreality, at the damned horrors of the evening. I could have screamed aloud; I sought with tears and prayers to smother down the crowd of hideous images and sounds with which my memory swarmed against me; and still, between the petitions, the ugly face of my iniquity stared into my soul. As the acuteness of this remorse began to die away, it was succeeded by a sense of joy. The problem of my conduct was solved. Hyde was thenceforth impossible; whether I would or not, I was now confined to the better part of my existence; and O, how I rejoiced to think it! with what willing humility, I embraced anew the restrictions of natural life! with what sincere renunciation, I locked the door by which I had so often gone and come, and ground the key under my heel!

The next day, came the news that the murder had been overlooked,[7] that the guilt of Hyde was patent to the world, and that the victim was a man high in public estimation. It was not only a crime, it had been a tragic folly. I think I was glad to know it; I think I was glad to have my better impulses thus buttressed and guarded by the terrors of the scaffold. Jekyll was now my city of refuge; let but Hyde peep out an instant, and the hands of all men would be raised to take and slay him.

I resolved in my future conduct to redeem the past; and I can say with honesty that my resolve was fruitful of some good. You know yourself how earnestly in the last months of last year, I laboured to relieve suffering; you know that much was done for others, and that the days passed quietly, almost happily for myself. Nor can I truly say that I wearied of this beneficent and innocent life; I think instead that I daily enjoyed it more completely; but I was still cursed with my duality of purpose; and as the first edge of my penitence wore off, the lower side of me, so long indulged, so recently chained down, began to growl for license. Not that I dreamed of resuscitating Hyde; the bare idea of that would startle me to frenzy: no, it was in my own person, that I was once more tempted to trifle with my conscience; and it was as an ordinary secret sinner, that I at last fell before the assaults of temptation.

There comes an end to all things; the most capacious measure is filled at last; and this brief condescension to my evil finally destroyed the balance of my soul. And yet I was not alarmed; the fall seemed natural, like a return to the old days before I had made my discovery. It was a fine, clear, January day, wet under foot where the frost had melted, but cloudless overhead; and the Regent's Park[8] was full of winter chirrupings and sweet with spring odours. I sat in the sun on a bench; the animal within me licking the chops of memory; the spiritual side a little drowsed, promising subsequent penitence, but not yet moved to begin. After all, I reflected, I was like my neighbours; and then I smiled, comparing myself with other men, comparing my active goodwill with the lazy cruelty of their neglect. And at the very moment of that vain-glorious thought, a

qualm came over me, a horrid nausea and the most deadly shuddering. These passed away, and left me faint; and then as in its turn the faintness subsided, I began to be aware of a change in the temper of my thoughts, a greater boldness, a contempt of danger, a solution of the bonds of obligation. I looked down; my clothes hung formlessly on my shrunken limbs; the hand that lay on my knee was corded and hairy. I was once more Edward Hyde. A moment before I had been safe of all men's respect, wealthy, beloved—the cloth laying for me in the dining-room at home; and now I was the common quarry of mankind, hunted, houseless, a known murderer, thrall to the gallows.

My reason wavered, but it did not fail me utterly. I have more than once observed that, in my second character, my faculties seemed sharpened to a point and my spirits more tensely elastic; thus it came about that, where Jekyll perhaps might have succumbed, Hyde rose to the importance of the moment. My drugs were in one of the presses of my cabinet; how was I to reach them? That was the problem that (crushing my temples in my hands) I set myself to solve. The laboratory door I had closed. If I sought to enter by the house, my own servants would consign me to the gallows. I saw I must employ another hand, and thought of Lanyon. How was he to be reached? how persuaded? Supposing that I escaped capture in the streets, how was I to make my way into his presence? and how should I, an unknown and displeasing visitor, prevail on the famous physician to rifle the study of his colleague, Dr. Jekyll? Then I remembered that of my original character, one part remained to me: I could write my own hand; and once I had conceived that kindling spark, the way that I must follow became lighted up from end to end.

Thereupon, I arranged my clothes as best I could, and summoning a passing hansom, drove to an hotel in Portland Street, the name of which I chanced to remember. At my appearance (which was indeed comical enough, however tragic a fate these garments covered) the driver could not conceal his mirth. I gnashed my teeth upon him with a gust of devilish fury; and the smile

withered from his face—happily for him—yet more happily for myself, for in another instant I had certainly dragged him from his perch. At the inn, as I entered, I looked about me with so black a countenance as made the attendants tremble; not a look did they exchange in my presence; but obsequiously took my orders, led me to a private room, and brought me wherewithal to write. Hyde in danger of his life was a creature new to me; shaken with inordinate anger, strung to the pitch of murder, lusting to inflict pain. Yet the creature was astute; mastered his fury with a great effort of the will; composed his two important letters, one to Lanyon and one to Poole; and that he might receive actual evidence of their being posted, sent them out with directions that they should be registered.

Thenceforward, he sat all day over the fire in the private room, gnawing his nails; there he dined, sitting alone with his fears, the waiter visibly quailing before his eye; and thence, when the night was fully come, he set forth in the corner of a closed cab, and was driven to and fro about the streets of the city. He, I say—I cannot say, I. That child of Hell had nothing human; nothing lived in him but fear and hatred. And when at last, thinking the driver had begun to grow suspicious, he discharged the cab and ventured on foot, attired in his misfitting clothes, an object marked out for observation, into the midst of the nocturnal passengers, these two base passions raged within him like a tempest. He walked fast, hunted by his fears, chattering to himself, skulking through the less frequented thoroughfares, counting the minutes that still divided him from midnight. Once a woman spoke to him, offering, I think, a box of lights.[9] He smote her in the face, and she fled.

When I came to myself at Lanyon's, the horror of my old friend perhaps affected me somewhat: I do not know; it was at least but a drop in the sea to the abhorrence with which I looked back upon these hours. A change had come over me. It was no longer the fear of the gallows, it was the horror of being Hyde that racked me. I received Lanyon's condemnation partly in a dream; it was partly in a dream that I came home to my own house and got into bed. I slept after the prostration of the day, with a stringent and profound

slumber which not even the nightmares that wrung me could avail to break. I awoke in the morning shaken, weakened, but refreshed. I still hated and feared the thought of the brute that slept within me, and I had not of course forgotten the appalling dangers of the day before; but I was once more at home, in my own house and close to my drugs; and gratitude for my escape shone so strong in my soul that it almost rivalled the brightness of hope.

I was stepping leisurely across the court after breakfast, drinking the chill of the air with pleasure, when I was seized again with those indescribable sensations that heralded the change; and I had but the time to gain the shelter of my cabinet, before I was once again raging and freezing with the passions of Hyde. It took on this occasion a double dose to recall me to myself; and alas! six hours after, as I sat looking sadly in the fire, the pangs returned, and the drug had to be re-administered. In short, from that day forth it seemed only by a great effort as of gymnastics, and only under the immediate stimulation of the drug, that I was able to wear the countenance of Jekyll. At all hours of the day and night, I would be taken with the premonitory shudder; above all, if I slept, or even dozed for a moment in my chair, it was always as Hyde that I awakened. Under the strain of this continually impending doom and by the sleeplessness to which I now condemned myself, ay, even beyond what I had thought possible to man, I became, in my own person, a creature eaten up and emptied by fever, languidly weak both in body and mind, and solely occupied by one thought: the horror of my other self. But when I slept, or when the virtue of the medicine wore off, I would leap almost without transition (for the pangs of transformation grew daily less marked) into the possession of a fancy brimming with images of terror, a soul boiling with causeless hatreds, and a body that seemed not strong enough to contain the raging energies of life. The powers of Hyde seemed to have grown with the sickliness of Jekyll. And certainly the hate that now divided them was equal on each side. With Jekyll, it was a thing of vital instinct. He had now seen the full deformity of that creature that shared with him some of the phenomena of consciousness, and

was co-heir with him to death: and beyond these links of community, which in themselves made the most poignant part of his distress, he thought of Hyde, for all his energy of life, as of something not only hellish but inorganic. This was the shocking thing; that the slime of the pit seemed to utter cries and voices; that the amorphous dust gesticulated and sinned; that what was dead, and had no shape, should usurp the offices of life. And this again, that that insurgent horror was knit to him closer than a wife, closer than an eye; lay caged in his flesh, where he heard it mutter and felt it struggle to be born; and at every hour of weakness, and in the confidence of slumber, prevailed against him, and deposed him out of life. The hatred of Hyde for Jekyll, was of a different order. His terror of the gallows drove him continually to commit temporary suicide, and return to his subordinate station of a part instead of a person; but he loathed the necessity, he loathed the despondency into which Jekyll was now fallen, and he resented the dislike with which he was himself regarded. Hence the apelike tricks that he would play me, scrawling in my own hand blasphemies on the pages of my books, burning the letters and destroying the portrait of my father; and indeed, had it not been for his fear of death, he would long ago have ruined himself in order to involve me in the ruin. But his love of life is wonderful; I go further: I, who sicken and freeze at the mere thought of him, when I recall the abjection and passion of this attachment, and when I know how he fears my power to cut him off by suicide, I find it in my heart to pity him.

It is useless, and the time awfully fails me, to prolong this description; no one has ever suffered such torments, let that suffice; and yet even to these, habit brought—no, not alleviation—but a certain callousness of soul, a certain acquiescence of despair; and my punishment might have gone on for years, but for the last calamity which has now fallen, and which has finally severed me from my own face and nature. My provision of the salt, which had never been renewed since the date of the first experiment, began to run low. I sent out for a fresh supply, and mixed the draught; the ebullition followed, and the first change of colour, not the second; I

drank it and it was without efficiency. You will learn from Poole how I have had London ransacked; it was in vain; and I am now persuaded that my first supply was impure, and that it was that unknown impurity which lent efficacy to the draught.

About a week has passed, and I am now finishing this statement under the influence of the last of the old powders. This, then, is the last time, short of a miracle, that Henry Jekyll can think his own thoughts or see his own face (now how sadly altered!) in the glass. Nor must I delay too long to bring my writing to an end; for if my narrative has hitherto escaped destruction, it has been by a combination of great prudence and great good luck. Should the throes of change take me in the act of writing it, Hyde will tear it in pieces; but if some time shall have elapsed after I have laid it by, his wonderful selfishness and circumscription to the moment will probably save it once again from the action of his apelike spite. And indeed the doom that is closing on us both, has already changed and crushed him. Half an hour from now, when I shall again and forever reindue[1] that hated personality, I know how I shall sit shuddering and weeping in my chair, or continue, with the most strained and fearstruck ecstasy of listening, to pace up and down this room (my last earthly refuge) and give ear to every sound of menace. Will Hyde die upon the scaffold? or will he find courage to release himself at the last moment? God knows; I am careless;[2] this is my true hour of death, and what is to follow concerns another than myself. Here then, as I lay down the pen and proceed to seal up my confession, I bring the life of that unhappy Henry Jekyll to an end.

1885 1886

Endnotes

- Note 3: Abilities.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Bundles of sticks used for fuel.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A minute amount (literally, an apothecaries' weight equal to about 1.3 grams).Return to reference 5

- Note 6: Water current that drives a mill wheel.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Compare with Acts 16:26, when the apostle Paul and his friend Silas were imprisoned at Philippi, a city in eastern Macedonia, an earthquake freed all the prisoners (none of whom fled).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Thugs.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Borrowed clothing; a reference to King Lear's cry on the heath, "Off, off you lendings!" (Shakespeare, *King Lear* 3.4.97).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Spirit or demon.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Dark.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In Daniel 5:5–31; the writing foretold the overthrow of Belshazzar, the Babylonian king, because of his transgressions against the Lord.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Strained to the highest point.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Drank a toast to.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: See Matthew 27:51: "the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Seen from above.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A large park in northwest London.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Matches.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Put on again.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Indifferent.Return to reference 2

OSCAR WILDE
1854–1900

In Oscar Wilde's comedy *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), Jack Worthing claims to have received a telegram about the death of his (imaginary) rakish brother Ernest in a Paris hotel. Five years later Wilde died in a hotel in Paris, where he was living in exile. The coincidence seems a curious paradigm of Wilde's career, for the connections between his life and his art were unusually close. Indeed, in his last years he told André Gide that he seemed to have put his genius into his life and only his talent into his writings.

Wilde was born and raised in Dublin, where his mother, Jane, an Irish nationalist, wrote poetry under the pseudonym "Speranza," and his father, Sir William, was a distinguished surgeon. After studying classics at Trinity College, Dublin, he won a scholarship to Oxford and there established a brilliant academic record. At Oxford he came under the influence of the aesthetic theories of John Ruskin (who was at the time professor of fine arts) and, more important, of Walter Pater. With characteristic hyperbole Wilde affirmed of Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873): "It is my golden book; I never travel anywhere without it. But it is the very flower of decadence; the last trumpet should have sounded the moment it was written."

After graduating in 1878, Wilde moved to London, where his fellow Irishmen George Bernard Shaw and William Butler Yeats were also to settle. Here Wilde quickly established himself both as a writer

and as a spokesperson for the school of "art for art's sake." In Wilde's view this school included not only French poets and critics but also a line of English poets going back through Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites to John Keats. In 1882 he visited America for a long (and successful) lecture tour, during which he startled audiences by airing the gospel of the "aesthetic movement." In one of these lectures, he asserted that "to disagree with three fourths of all England on all points of view is one of the first elements of sanity."

For his role as a spokesperson for aestheticism, Wilde had many gifts. From all accounts he was a dazzling conversationalist. Yeats reported, after first listening to him: "I never before heard a man talking with perfect sentences, as if he had written them all overnight with labour and yet all spontaneous." Wilde delighted his listeners not only by his polished wordplay but also by uttering opinions that were both outrageous and incongruous—for example, his solemn affirmation that Queen Victoria was one of the three women he most admired and whom he would have married "with pleasure" (the other two were the actress Sarah Bernhardt and Lillie Langtry, reputedly a mistress of Victoria's son Edward, Prince of Wales).

In addition to his mastery of witty conversation, Wilde had the gifts of an actor who delights in gaining attention. Pater had been a very shy and reticent man, but there was nothing reticent about his disciple, who had early discovered that a flamboyant style of dress was one of the most effective means of gaining attention. Like the dandies of the earlier decades of the nineteenth century (including Benjamin Disraeli and Charles Dickens), Wilde favored colorful costumes in marked contrast to the sober black suits of the late-Victorian middle classes. A green carnation in his buttonhole and velvet knee breeches became for Wilde badges of his youthful iconoclasm; and even when he approached middle age, he continued to emphasize the gap between generations. In a letter written when he was forty-two years old, he remarks: "The opinions of the old on matters of Art are, of course, of no value whatever."

Wilde's campaign quickly gained an amused response from middle-class quarters. In 1881 W. S. Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan staged their comic opera *Patience*, which mocked the affectations of the aesthetes like Wilde in the character of Bunthorne, especially in his song "If You're Anxious for to Shine in the High Aesthetic Line."

Wilde's successes for seventeen years in England and America were, of course, not limited to his self-advertising stunts as a dandy. In his writings he excelled in a variety of genres: as a critic of literature and of society (*The Decay of Lying*, 1889, and *The Soul of Man under Socialism*, 1891) and also as a novelist, poet, and dramatist. Much of his prose, including *The Critic as Artist* (1890), develops Pater's aestheticism, particularly its sense of the superiority of art to life and its lack of obligation to any standards of mimesis. His novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which created a sensation when it was published in 1891, takes a somewhat different perspective. The novel is a strikingly ingenious story of a handsome young man and his selfish pursuit of sensual pleasures. Until the end of the book he remains fresh and healthy in appearance while his portrait mysteriously changes into a horrible image of his corrupted soul. Although the preface to the novel (reprinted here) emphasizes that art and morality are totally separate, in the novel, at least in its later chapters, Wilde seems to be portraying the evils of self-regarding hedonism.

As a poet Wilde felt overshadowed by the Victorian predecessors whom he admired—Robert Browning, D. G. Rossetti, and Algernon Charles Swinburne—and had trouble finding his own voice. Many of the poems in his first volume (1881) are highly derivative, but pieces such as "Impression du Matin" (1885) and "The Harlot's House" (1881) offer a distinctive perspective on city streets that seems to anticipate early poems by T. S. Eliot. His most outstanding success, however, was as a writer of comedies; staged in London and New York from 1892 through 1895, these included *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *A Woman of No Importance*, *An Ideal Husband*, and *The Importance of Being Earnest.*

In the spring of 1895 this triumphant success suddenly crumbled when Wilde was arrested and sentenced to prison, with hard labor, for two years. Although Wilde was married and the father of two children, he did not hide his relationships with men, and in fact ended up shaping, to his personal cost, a long-standing public image of "the homosexual." When he began a romance (in 1891) with the handsome young poet Lord Alfred Douglas, he set in motion the events that brought about his ruin. In 1895 Lord Alfred's father, the marquess of Queensberry, accused Wilde of homosexuality; Wilde recklessly sued for libel, lost the case, and was thereupon arrested and convicted for what had only recently come onto the statute books as a serious offense. (A late addition to the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, known as the Labouchère Amendment after the member of Parliament who had proposed it, effectively criminalized all forms of sexual relations between men. An excerpt from the amendment appears in this volume.) The revulsion of feeling against him in Britain and America was violent, and the aesthetic movement suffered a severe setback not only with the public but also among writers as well.

His two years in jail led Wilde to write two uncharacteristically sober works, his poem *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (1898) and his prose confession *De Profundis* (1905). After leaving prison, Wilde emigrated to France, where he lived out the last three years of his life under an assumed name. Before his departure from England he had been divorced and declared a bankrupt, and in France he had to rely on friends for financial support. Wilde is buried in Paris in the Père Lachaise cemetery.

Impression du Matin[1]

The Thames nocturne of blue and gold[2]
  Changed to a harmony in grey;
  A barge with ochre-colored hay
Dropped from the wharf:[3] and chill and cold

The yellow fog came creeping down
  The bridges, till the houses' walls
  Seemed changed to shadows, and St. Paul's
Loomed like a bubble o'er the town.[4]

Then suddenly arose the clang
  Of waking life; the streets were stirred
  With country wagons; and a bird
Flew to the glistening roofs and sang.

But one pale woman all alone,
  The daylight kissing her wan hair,
  Loitered beneath the gas lamps' flare,
With lips of flame and heart of stone.

1881

Endnotes

- Note 1: Impression of the morning (French).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare with the "Nocturnes" (paintings of nighttime scenes) by James McNeill Whistler in the 1870s. *Nocturne in Blue and Gold: Old Battersea Bridge* was one of this series; it was painted by 1875 but given its present title in 1892. In the next line Wilde may be referring to an earlier painting by

Whistler, *Harmony in Gray and Green: Miss Cicely Alexander* (1872–74).Return to reference 2

- Note 3: That is, left the wharf and went down river with the ebb tide.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, the large dome of St. Paul's Cathedral in London.Return to reference 4

The Harlot's House

We caught the tread of dancing feet,
We loitered down the moonlit street,
And stopped beneath the Harlot's house.

Inside, above the din and fray,
We heard the loud musicians play
The "Treues Liebes Herz" of Strauss.[1]

Like strange mechanical grotesques,
Making fantastic arabesques,
The shadows raced across the blind.

We watched the ghostly dancers spin
To sound of horn and violin,
Like black leaves wheeling in the wind.

Like wire-pulled automatons,
Slim silhouetted skeletons
Went sidling through the slow quadrille,[2]

Then took each other by the hand,
And danced a stately saraband;[3]
Their laughter echoed thin and shrill.

Sometimes a clockwork puppet pressed
A phantom lover to her breast,
Sometimes they seemed to try to sing,

Sometimes a horrible marionette
Came out, and smoked its cigarette
Upon the steps like a live thing.[4]

Then turning to my love I said,
"The dead are dancing with the dead,
The dust is whirling with the dust."

But she, she heard the violin,
And left my side, and entered in;
Love passed into the house of Lust.

Then suddenly the tune went false,
The dancers wearied of the waltz,
The shadows ceased to wheel and whirl,

And down the long and silent street,
The dawn, with silver-sandaled feet,
Crept like a frightened girl.

1885, 1908

Endnotes

- Note 1: *Heart of True Love*, a waltz by the Austrian composer and "Waltz King" Johann Strauss (1825–1899).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: An intricate dance involving four couples facing each other in a square.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A slow and stately dance, originating in Spain.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In an illustration for the poem by Althea Gyles (approved by Wilde), the marionette is pictured as a man in evening dress.Return to reference 4

From The Critic as Artist[1]

[CRITICISM ITSELF AN ART]

ERNEST Gilbert, you sound too harsh a note. Let us go back to the more gracious fields of literature. What was it you said? That it was more difficult to talk about a thing than to do it?

GILBERT [*After a pause.*] Yes: I believe I ventured upon that simple truth. Surely you see now that I am right? When man acts he is a puppet. When he describes he is a poet. The whole secret lies in that. It was easy enough on the sandy plains by windy Ilion[2] to send the notched arrow from the painted bow, or to hurl against the shield of hide and flamelike brass the long ash-handled spear. It was easy for the adulterous queen to spread the Tyrian carpets for her lord,[3] and then, as he lay couched in the marble bath, to throw over his head the purple net, and call to her smooth-faced lover to stab through the meshes at the heart that should have broken at Aulis.[4] For Antigone[5] even, with Death waiting for her as her bridegroom, it was easy to pass through the tainted air at noon, and climb the hill, and strew with kindly earth the wretched naked corse that had no tomb. But what of those who wrote about these things? What of those who gave them reality, and made them live forever? Are they not greater than the men and women they sing of? "Hector that sweet knight is dead."[6] And Lucian[7] tells us how in the dim underworld Menippus saw the bleaching skull of Helen, and marveled that it was for so grim a favour that all those horned ships were launched, those beautiful mailed men laid low, those towered cities brought to dust. Yet, every day the swanlike daughter of Leda comes out on the battlements, and looks down at the tide of war. The greybeards wonder at her loveliness, and she stands by the side of the king.[8] In his chamber of stained ivory lies her leman.[9] He is polishing his

dainty armour, and combing the scarlet plume. With squire and page, her husband passes from tent to tent. She can see his bright hair, and hears, or fancies that she hears, that clear cold voice. In the courtyard below, the son of Priam is buckling on his brazen cuirass. The white arms of Andromache[1] are around his neck. He sets his helmet on the ground, lest their babe should be frightened. Behind the embroidered curtains of his pavilion sits Achilles,[2] in perfumed raiment, while in harness of gilt and silver the friend of his soul[3] arrays himself to go forth to fight. From a curiously carven chest that his mother Thetis had brought to his shipside, the Lord of the Myrmidons[4] takes out that mystic chalice that the lip of man had never touched, and cleanses it with brimstone, and with fresh water cools it, and, having washed his hands, fills with black wine its burnished hollow, and spills the thick grape-blood upon the ground in honor of Him whom at Dodona[5] barefooted prophets worshipped, and prays to Him, and knows not that he prays in vain, and that by the hands of two knights from Troy, Panthous' son, Euphorbus, whose love-locks were looped with gold, and the Priamid,[6] the lion-hearted, Patroclus, the comrade of comrades, must meet his doom. Phantoms, are they? Heroes of mist and mountain? Shadows in a song? No: they are real. Action! What is action? It dies at the moment of its energy. It is a base concession to fact. The world is made by the singer for the dreamer.

ERNEST While you talk it seems to me to be so.

GILBERT It is so in truth. On the mouldering citadel of Troy lies the lizard like a thing of green bronze. The owl has built her nest in the palace of Priam. Over the empty plain wander shepherd and goatherd with their flocks, and where, on the wine-surfaced, oily sea, *οἴνοψ πόντος*,[7] as Homer calls it, copper-prowed and streaked with vermilion, the great galleys of the Danaoi[8] came in their gleaming crescent, the lonely tunny-fisher[9] sits in his little boat and watches the bobbing corks of his net. Yet, every morning the doors of the city are thrown open, and on foot, or in horse-drawn chariot, the warriors go forth to battle, and mock their

enemies from behind their iron masks. All day long the fight rages, and when night comes the torches gleam by the tents, and the cresset[1] burns in the hall. Those who live in marble or on painted panel know of life but a single exquisite instant, eternal indeed in its beauty, but limited to one note of passion or one mood of calm. Those whom the poet makes live have their myriad emotions of joy and terror, of courage and despair, of pleasure and of suffering. The seasons come and go in glad or saddening pageant, and with winged or leaden feet the years pass by before them. They have their youth and their manhood, they are children, and they grow old. It is always dawn for St. Helena, as Veronese saw her at the window.[2] Through the still morning air the angels bring her the symbol of God's pain.[3] The cool breezes of the morning lift the gilt threads from her brow. On that little hill by the city of Florence, where the lovers of Giorgione[4] are lying, it is always the solstice of noon, made so languorous by summer suns that hardly can the slim naked girl dip into the marble tank the round bubble of clear glass, and the long fingers of the lute player rest idly upon the chords. It is twilight always for the dancing nymphs whom Corot[5] set free among the silver poplars of France. In eternal twilight they move, those frail diaphanous figures, whose tremulous white feet seem not to touch the dew-drenched grass they tread on. But those who walk in epos,[6] drama, or romance, see through the labouring months the young moons wax and wane, and watch the night from evening unto morning star, and from sunrise unto sunsetting can note the shifting day with all its gold and shadow. For them, as for us, the flowers bloom and wither, and the Earth, that Green-tressed Goddess as Coleridge calls her,[7] alters her raiment for their pleasure. The statue is concentrated to one moment of perfection. The image stained upon the canvas possesses no spiritual element of growth or change. If they know nothing of death, it is because they know little of life, for the secrets of life and death belong to those, and those only, whom the sequence of time affects, and who possess not merely the present but the future, and can rise or fall from a

past of glory or of shame. Movement, that problem of the visible arts, can be truly realized by Literature alone. It is Literature that shows us the body in its swiftness and the soul in its unrest.

ERNEST Yes; I see now what you mean. But, surely, the higher you place the creative artist, the lower must the critic rank.

GILBERT Why so?

ERNEST Because the best that he can give us will be but an echo of rich music, a dim shadow of clear-outlined form. It may, indeed, be that life is chaos, as you tell me that it is; that its martyrdoms are mean and its heroisms ignoble; and that it is the function of Literature to create, from the rough material of actual existence, a new world that will be more marvellous, more enduring, and more true than the world that common eyes look upon, and through which common natures seek to realize their perfection. But surely, if this new world has been made by the spirit and touch of a great artist, it will be a thing so complete and perfect that there will be nothing left for the critic to do. I quite understand now, and indeed admit most readily, that it is far more difficult to talk about a thing than to do it. But it seems to me that this sound and sensible maxim, which is really extremely soothing to one's feelings, and should be adopted as its motto by every Academy of Literature all over the world, applies only to the relations that exist between Art and Life, and not to any relations that there may be between Art and Criticism.

GILBERT But, surely, Criticism is itself an art. And just as artistic creation implies the working of the critical faculty, and, indeed, without it cannot be said to exist at all, so Criticism is really creative in the highest sense of the word. Criticism is, in fact, both creative and independent.

ERNEST Independent?

GILBERT Yes; independent. Criticism is no more to be judged by any low standard of imitation or resemblance than is the work of poet or sculptor. The critic occupies the same relation to the work of art that he criticizes as the artist does to the visible world of form and colour, or the unseen world of passion and of thought. He does not even require for the perfection of his art the finest materials.

Anything will serve his purpose. And just as out of the sordid and sentimental amours of the silly wife of a small country doctor in the squalid village of Yonville-l'Abbaye, near Rouen, Gustave Flaubert[8] was able to create a classic, and make a masterpiece of style, so, from subjects of little or of no importance, such as the pictures in this year's Royal Academy,[9] or in any year's Royal Academy for that matter, Mr. Lewis Morris's poems, M. Ohnet's novels, or the plays of Mr. Henry Arthur Jones,[1] the true critic can, if it be his pleasure so to direct or waste his faculty of contemplation, produce work that will be flawless in beauty and instinct with intellectual subtlety. Why not? Dullness is always an irresistible temptation for brilliancy, and stupidity is the permanent *Bestia Trionfans*[2] that calls wisdom from its cave. To an artist so creative as the critic, what does subject matter signify? No more and no less than it does to the novelist and the painter. Like them, he can find his motives everywhere. Treatment is the test. There is nothing that has not in it suggestion or challenge.

ERNEST But is Criticism really a creative art?

GILBERT Why should it not be? It works with materials, and puts them into a form that is at once new and delightful. What more can one say of poetry? Indeed, I would call criticism a creation within a creation. For just as the great artists, from Homer and Aeschylus, down to Shakespeare and Keats, did not go directly to life for their subject matter, but sought for it in myth, and legend, and ancient tale, so the critic deals with materials that others have, as it were, purified for him, and to which imaginative form and colour have been already added. Nay, more, I would say that the highest Criticism, being the purest form of personal impression, is in its way more creative than creation, as it has least reference to any standard external to itself, and is, in fact, its own reason for existing, and, as the Greeks would put it, in itself, and to itself, an end. Certainly, it is never trammeled by any shackles of verisimilitude. No ignoble considerations of probability, that cowardly concession to the tedious repetitions of domestic or

public life, affect it ever. One may appeal from fiction unto fact. But from the soul there is no appeal.

ERNEST From the soul?

GILBERT Yes, from the soul. That is what the highest criticism really is, the record of one's own soul. It is more fascinating than history, as it is concerned simply with oneself. It is more delightful than philosophy, as its subject is concrete and not abstract, real and not vague. It is the only civilized form of autobiography, as it deals not with the events, but with the thoughts of one's life, not with life's physical accidents of deed or circumstance, but with the spiritual moods and imaginative passions of the mind. I am always amused by the silly vanity of those writers and artists of our day who seem to imagine that the primary function of the critic is to chatter about their second-rate work. The best that one can say of most modern creative art is that it is just a little less vulgar than reality, and so the critic, with his fine sense of distinction and sure instinct of delicate refinement, will prefer to look into the silver mirror or through the woven veil, and will turn his eyes away from the chaos and clamour of actual existence, though the mirror be tarnished and the veil be torn. His sole aim is to chronicle his own impressions. It is for him that pictures are painted, books written, and marble hewn into form.

ERNEST I seem to have heard another theory of Criticism.

GILBERT Yes: it has been said by one whose gracious memory we all revere,[3] and the music of whose pipe once lured Proserpina from her Sicilian fields, and made those white feet stir, and not in vain, the Cumnor cowslips, that the proper aim of Criticism is to see the object as in itself it really is. But this is a very serious error, and takes no cognizance of Criticism's most perfect form, which is in its essence purely subjective, and seeks to reveal its own secret and not the secret of another. For the highest Criticism deals with art not as expressive but as impressive purely.

ERNEST But is that really so?

GILBERT Of course it is. Who cares whether Mr. Ruskin's views on Turner[4] are sound or not? What does it matter? That mighty and

majestic prose of his, so fervid and so fiery-colored in its noble eloquence, so rich in its elaborate symphonic music, so sure and certain, at its best, in subtle choice of word and epithet, is at least as great a work of art as any of those wonderful sunsets that bleach or rot on their corrupted canvases in England's Gallery; greater indeed, one is apt to think at times, not merely because its equal beauty is more enduring, but on account of the fuller variety of its appeal, soul speaking to soul in those long-cadenced lines, not through form and colour alone, though through these, indeed, completely and without loss, but with intellectual and emotional utterance, with lofty passion and with loftier thought, with imaginative insight, and with poetic aim; greater, I always think, even as Literature is the greater art. Who, again, cares whether Mr. Pater has put into the portrait of Mona Lisa[5] something that Leonardo never dreamed of? The painter may have been merely the slave of an archaic smile, as some have fancied, but whenever I pass into the cool galleries of the Palace of the Louvre, and stand before that strange figure "set in its marble chair in that cirque of fantastic rocks, as in some faint light under sea," I murmur to myself, "She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her: and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants; and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as St. Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands." And I say to my friend, "The presence that thus so strangely rose beside the waters is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years man had come to desire"; and he answers me, "Hers is the head upon which all 'the ends of the world are come,' and the eyelids are a little weary."

And so the picture becomes more wonderful to us than it really is, and reveals to us a secret of which, in truth, it knows nothing,

and the music of the mystical prose is as sweet in our ears as was that flute-player's music that lent to the lips of La Gioconda[6] those subtle and poisonous curves. Do you ask me what Leonardo would have said had any one told him of this picture that "all the thoughts and experience of the world had etched and moulded therein that which they had of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the reverie of the Middle Age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias?" He would probably have answered that he had contemplated none of these things, but had concerned himself simply with certain arrangements of lines and masses, and with new and curious colour-harmonies of blue and green. And it is for this very reason that the criticism which I have quoted is criticism of the highest kind. It treats the work of art simply as a starting point for a new creation. It does not confine itself—let us at least suppose so for the moment—to discovering the real intention of the artist and accepting that as final. And in this it is right, for the meaning of any beautiful created thing is, at least, as much in the soul of him who looks at it, as it was in his soul who wrought it. Nay, it is rather the beholder who lends to the beautiful thing its myriad meanings, and makes it marvelous for us, and sets it in some new relation to the age, so that it becomes a vital portion of our lives, and symbol of what we pray for, or perhaps of what, having prayed for, we fear that we may receive. The longer I study, Ernest, the more clearly I see that the beauty of the visible arts is, as the beauty of music, impressive[7] primarily, and that it may be marred, and indeed often is so, by any excess of intellectual intention on the part of the artist. For when the work is finished it has, as it were, an independent life of its own, and may deliver a message far other than that which was put into its lips to say. Sometimes, when I listen to the overture to *Tannhäuser*,[8] I seem indeed to see that comely knight treading delicately on the flower-strewn grass, and to hear the voice of Venus calling to him from the caverned hill. But at other times it speaks to me of a

thousand different things, of myself, it may be, and my own life, or of the lives of others whom one has loved and grown weary of loving, or of the passions that man has known, or of the passions that man has not known, and so has sought for. Tonight it may fill one with that ΕΡΩΣ ΤΩΝ ΑΔΥΝΑΤΩΝ, that *amour de l'impossible*,[9] which falls like a madness on many who think they live securely and out of reach of harm, so that they sicken suddenly with the poison of unlimited desire, and, in the infinite pursuit of what they may not obtain, grow faint and swoon or stumble. Tomorrow, like the music of which Aristotle and Plato tell us, the noble Dorian music of the Greek,[1] it may perform the office of a physician, and give us an anodyne against pain, and heal the spirit that is wounded, and "bring the soul into harmony with all right things." And what is true about music is true about all the arts. Beauty has as many meanings as man has moods. Beauty is the symbol of symbols. Beauty reveals everything, because it expresses nothing. When it shows us itself, it shows us the whole fiery-coloured world.

ERNEST But is such work as you have talked about really criticism?

GILBERT It is the highest Criticism, for it criticizes not merely the individual work of art, but Beauty itself, and fills with wonder a form which the artist may have left void, or not understood, or understood incompletely.

ERNEST The highest Criticism, then, is more creative than creation, and the primary aim of the critic is to see the object as in itself it really is not; that is your theory, I believe?

GILBERT Yes, that is my theory. To the critic the work of art is simply a suggestion for a new work of his own, that need not necessarily bear any obvious resemblance to the thing it criticizes. The one characteristic of a beautiful form is that one can put into it whatever one wishes, and see in it whatever one chooses to see; and the Beauty, that gives to creation its universal and aesthetic element, makes the critic a creator in his turn, and whispers of a thousand different things which were not present in the mind of

him who carved the statue or painted the panel or graved the gem.

It is sometimes said by those who understand neither the nature of the highest Criticism nor the charm of the highest Art, that the pictures that the critic loves most to write about are those that belong to the anecdotage of painting, and that deal with scenes taken out of literature or history. But this is not so. Indeed, pictures of this kind are far too intelligible. As a class, they rank with illustrations, and even considered from this point of view are failures, as they do not stir the imagination, but set definite bounds to it. For the domain of the painter is, as I suggested before, widely different from that of the poet. To the latter belongs life in its full and absolute entirety; not merely the beauty that men look at, but the beauty that men listen to also; not merely the momentary grace of form or the transient gladness of colour, but the whole sphere of feeling, the perfect cycle of thought. The painter is so far limited that it is only through the mask of the body that he can show us the mystery of the soul; only through conventional images that he can handle ideas; only through its physical equivalents that he can deal with psychology. And how inadequately does he do it then, asking us to accept the torn turban of the Moor for the noble rage of Othello, or a dotard in a storm for the wild madness of Lear! Yet it seems as if nothing could stop him. Most of our elderly English painters spend their wicked and wasted lives in poaching upon the domain of the poets, marring their motives by clumsy treatment, and striving to render, by visible form or colour, the marvel of what is invisible, the splendour of what is not seen. Their pictures are, as a natural consequence, insufferably tedious. They have degraded the invisible arts into the obvious arts, and the one thing not worth looking at is the obvious. I do not say that poet and painter may not treat of the same subject. They have always done so, and will always do so. But while the poet can be pictorial or not, as he chooses, the painter must be pictorial always. For a painter is limited, not to what he sees in nature, but to what upon canvas may be seen.

And so, my dear Ernest, pictures of this kind will not really fascinate the critic. He will turn from them to such works as make him brood and dream and fancy, to works that possess the subtle quality of suggestion, and seem to tell one that even from them there is an escape into a wider world. It is sometimes said that the tragedy of an artist's life is that he cannot realize his ideal. But the true tragedy that dogs the steps of most artists is that they realize their ideal too absolutely. For, when the ideal is realized, it is robbed of its wonder and its mystery, and becomes simply a new starting point for an ideal that is other than itself. This is the reason why music is the perfect type of art. Music can never reveal its ultimate secret. This, also, is the explanation of the value of limitations in art. The sculptor gladly surrenders imitative colour, and the painter the actual dimensions of form, because by such renunciations they are able to avoid too definite a presentation of the Real, which would be mere imitation, and too definite a realization of the Ideal, which would be too purely intellectual. It is through its very incompleteness that Art becomes complete in beauty, and so addresses itself, not to the faculty of recognition nor to the faculty of reason, but to the aesthetic sense alone, which, while accepting both reason and recognition as stages of apprehension, subordinates them both to a pure synthetic impression of the work of art as a whole, and, taking whatever alien emotional elements the work may possess, uses their very complexity as a means by which a richer unity may be added to the ultimate impression itself. You see, then, how it is that the aesthetic critic rejects these obvious modes of art that have but one message to deliver, and having delivered it become dumb and sterile, and seeks rather for such modes as suggest reverie and mood, and by their imaginative beauty make all interpretations true, and no interpretation final. Some resemblance, no doubt, the creative work of the critic will have to the work that has stirred him to creation, but it will be such resemblance as exists, not between Nature and the mirror that the painter of landscape or figure may be supposed to hold up to her, but between Nature and the work of the decorative artist. Just as

on the flowerless carpets of Persia, tulip and rose blossom indeed and are lovely to look on, though they are not reproduced in visible shape or line; just as the pearl and purple of the sea shell is echoed in the church of St. Mark at Venice; just as the vaulted ceiling of the wondrous chapel at Ravenna is made gorgeous by the gold and green and sapphire of the peacock's tail, though the birds of Juno[2] fly not across it; so the critic reproduces the work that he criticizes in a mode that is never imitative, and part of whose charm may really consist in the rejection of resemblance, and shows us in this way not merely the meaning but also the mystery of Beauty, and, by transforming each art into literature, solves once for all the problem of Art's unity.

But I see it is time for supper. After we have discussed some Chambertin and a few ortolans,[3] we will pass on to the question of the critic considered in the light of the interpreter.

ERNEST Ah! you admit, then, that the critic may occasionally be allowed to see the object as in itself it really is.

GILBERT I am not quite sure. Perhaps I may admit it after supper. There is a subtle influence in supper.

1890, 1891

Endnotes

- Note 1: In "the library of a house in Piccadilly," Gilbert and Ernest, two sophisticated young men, are talking about the use and function of criticism. Earlier in the dialogue Ernest had complained that criticism is officious and useless: "Why should the artist be troubled by the shrill clamour of criticism? Why should those who cannot create take upon themselves to estimate the value of creative work?" Gilbert, in his reply, argues that criticism is creative in its own right. He digresses to compare the life of action unfavorably with the life of art: actions are dangerous and their results unpredictable; "if we lived long enough to see the results of our actions it may be

that those who call themselves good would be sickened by a dull remorse, and those whom the world calls evil stirred by a noble joy." The excerpt printed here begins immediately after this digression.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Troy. Gilbert is referring to Homer's *Iliad.*Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Agamemnon, king of Mycenae. Aeschylus's tragedy of that name tells how his wife, Clytemnestra ("the adulterous queen"), and his cousin Aegisthus ("her smooth-faced lover") conspired to murder him. He hubristically walked on carpets dyed purple, a color derived from shellfish off Tyre (a city located in what is today Lebanon).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Where Agamemnon sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia (so that the Greek fleet could sail for Troy), thus incurring Clytemnestra's wrath.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Antigone defied Creon, king of Thebes, by sprinkling earth on the body of her brother whose burial Creon had forbidden, and was punished by death; see Sophocles' play *Antigone* (ca. 441 B.C.E.).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Compare with Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* 5.2.647: "The sweet war-man [Hector] is dead and rotten."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Greek satirist (b. ca. 120 C.E.), one of whose main influences was Menippus (early 3rd century B.C.E.), a Greek philosopher who was the first to express his views in a seriocomic style. The reference is to Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead.*Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Priam. Homer in *Iliad* 3.156–58 describes the old men of Troy admiring the beauty of Helen, daughter of Leda and of Zeus (who came to Leda in the form of a swan).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Lover (that is, Paris).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Wife of Hector, one of the sons of Priam and the finest Trojan warrior.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Son of Peleus and of the sea nymph Thetis; Achilles was the greatest Greek warrior fighting in the Trojan War. The scene

set here is a tissue of recollections from the *Iliad.*Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, Patroclus.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Warriors who accompanied Achilles to Troy.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Seat of a very ancient oracle of Zeus.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The son of Priam, that is, Hector. With Euphorbus's help he killed Patroclus, and in turn he was slain by Achilles.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Wine-dark sea (Greek).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Greeks.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Tuna fishers.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Metal basket holding fuel burned for illumination, often hung from the ceiling.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: One of the best-known works of the Italian painter Paolo Veronese (Paolo Caliari, 1528–1588) is *Helena's Vision.*Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, the cross.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Italian painter (ca. 1477–1511), the most brilliant colorist of his time. The painting is *The Concert.*Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796–1875), French painter best known for his shimmering trees.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Epic poetry.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Compare with S. T. Coleridge's "Hymn to the Earth" (1834), line 10, where Earth is called "Green-haired Goddess."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: French novelist (1821–1880); the reference is to his novel *Madame Bovary* (1857).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The Royal Academy of Arts, founded in 1768, holds an annual summer exhibition of new work.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Wilde is mischievously suggesting his low opinion of the contemporary writers just named. Morris (1833–1907) was a popular Welsh poet and essayist often ridiculed by the critics.

Georges Ohnet (1848–1918) was a French novelist and dramatist. Jones (1851–1929) was one of the leading English playwrights of his time.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Triumphant beast (Wilde's mixture of Italian and Latin); a reference to *Spaccio della Bestia Trionfante* (*Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast,* 1584), a philosophical allegory by the Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, Matthew Arnold, whose poem "Thyrsis" (1866; lines 91–100) evokes the legend of Proserpina, a goddess associated with the pastoral landscapes of Sicily. Arnold believed that it would be "in vain" to summon Proserpina to visit the Cumnor hills landscape (near Oxford), but Wilde's speaker here flatters Arnold that the summons was so beautiful that it was "not in vain." For the prose passage about the "aim of Criticism," see Arnold's "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1864).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: For John Ruskin's defense of the paintings of J. M. W. Turner, see *Modern Painters* (1843), especially his praise of Turner's *The Slave Ship* (p. 466).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: All remaining references in this paragraph and the first in the next are to Walter Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (p. 712).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, the *Mona Lisa* (the portrait was of the wife of Francesco del Gioconda—hence "La Gioconda").Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, designed to create an impression of the senses.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The 1845 opera by Richard Wagner, based on the legend of a 14th-century German poet who fell under the spell of Venus and lived with her in a mountain, Hörselberg.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Love of the impossible, in Greek (in capital letters, perhaps to give the effect of an inscription) and in French.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Both Plato (*Republic* 3) and Aristotle (*Politics* 8) praise the educational appropriateness of the Dorian mode (Aristotle

calls it especially steady and manly), as opposed to Eastern music; the Dorians were a people of ancient Greece, the last of the northern invaders (ca. 1100–950 B.C.E.).Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Peacocks, associated in classical mythology with the goddess Juno (in Greek, Hera) because she is said to have set in the bird's tail the eyes of hundred-eyed Argus, who died in her service.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Small birds esteemed by epicures for their delicate flavor. "Chambertin": one of the finest wines of Burgundy.Return to reference 3

Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

The artist is the creator of beautiful things.
To reveal art and conceal the artist is art's aim.
The critic is he who can translate into another manner or a new material his impression of beautiful things.

The highest, as the lowest, form of criticism is a mode of autobiography.

Those who find ugly meanings in beautiful things are corrupt without being charming. This is a fault.

Those who find beautiful meanings in beautiful things are the cultivated. For these there is hope.

They are the elect to whom beautiful things mean only Beauty.

There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book.
Books are well written, or badly written. That is all.

The nineteenth-century dislike of Realism is the rage of Caliban[1] seeing his own face in a glass.

The nineteenth-century dislike of Romanticism is the rage of Caliban not seeing his own face in a glass.

The moral life of man forms part of the subject matter of the artist, but the morality of art consists in the perfect use of an imperfect medium. No artist desires to prove anything. Even things that are true can be proved.

No artist has ethical sympathies. An ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style.

No artist is ever morbid. The artist can express everything.

Thought and language are to the artist instruments of an art.

Vice and Virtue are to the artist materials for an art.

From the point of view of form, the type of all the arts is the art of the musician.
From the point of view of feeling, the actor's craft is the type.

All art is at once surface and symbol.

Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril.

Those who read the symbol do so at their peril.

It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors.

Diversity of opinion about a work of art shows that the work is new, complex, and vital.

When critics disagree the artist is in accord with himself. We can forgive a man for making a useful thing as long as he does not admire it. The only excuse for making a useless thing is that one admires it intensely.

All art is quite useless.

1891

Endnotes

- Note 1: The character in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* who is half-human, half-monster.Return to reference 1

The Importance of Being Earnest

Of the four stage comedies by Wilde, his last, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, is generally regarded as his masterpiece. It was first staged in February 1895 and was an immediate hit. Only one critic failed to find it delightful; curiously, this was Wilde's fellow playwright from Ireland, George Bernard Shaw, who, though amused, found Wilde's wit "hateful" and "sinister," and thought the play exhibited "real degeneracy." Despite Shaw's complaints, the first London production ran for eighty-six performances; but when Wilde was sentenced to prison, production ceased for several years. Shortly before his death it was revived in London and New York, and it has subsequently become a classic.

In its original version the play was in four acts. At the request of the stage producer, Wilde reduced it to three acts—the version almost always used in performances and the version reprinted here. A few of the notes in the text cite passages from the four-act version.

The play was first published in 1899. Earlier, in an interview, Wilde had described his overall aim in writing it: "It has as its philosophy . . . that we should treat all the trivial things of life seriously, and all the serious things of life with sincere and studied triviality." Just before his death he remarked that although he was pleased with the "bright and happy" tone and temper of his play, he wished it might have had a "higher seriousness of intent." Later critics have found this seriousness of intent in the play's deconstruction of Victorian moral and social values. Like another Victorian masterpiece of the absurd, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), *The Importance of Being Earnest* empties manners and morals of their underlying sense to create a nominalist world where earnest is not a quality of character but a name, where words, to paraphrase Humpty Dumpty in *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871), mean what you choose them to mean, neither more nor less.

The literary ancestry of Wilde's play has been variously identified. In its witty wordplay and worldly attitudes it has been likened to

comedies of the Restoration period such as William Congreve's *Love for Love* (1695). In its genial and lighthearted tone, it has some affinities with the festive comedies of Shakespeare, such as *Twelfth Night* (ca. 1601), and with Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773). A more immediate predecessor was *Engaged* (1877), a comic play by W. S. Gilbert that anticipated some of the burlesque effects exploited by Wilde, such as the inviolable imperturbability of the speakers and the interrupting of sentimental scenes by the consumption of food. Gilbert's advice to the actors who were putting on his *Engaged* is worth citing as a clue to how *The Importance of Being Earnest* may be most effectively imagined as a stage representation:

> It is absolutely essential to the success of this piece that it should be played with the most perfect earnestness and gravity throughout. . . . Directly the actors show that they are conscious of the absurdity of their utterances the piece begins to drag.

The Importance of Being Earnest

First Act

SCENE—*Morning room in* ALGERNON *'s flat in Half-Moon Street.*[1]

The room is luxuriously and artistically furnished. The sound of a piano is heard in the adjoining room.

[LANE *is arranging afternoon tea on the table, and after the music has ceased,* ALGERNON *enters.*]

ALGERNON Did you hear what I was playing, Lane?

LANE I didn't think it polite to listen, sir.

ALGERNON I'm sorry for that, for your sake. I don't play accurately—anyone can play accurately—but I play with wonderful expression. As far as the piano is concerned, sentiment is my forte. I keep science for Life.

LANE Yes, sir.

ALGERNON And, speaking of the science of Life, have you got the cucumber sandwiches cut for Lady Bracknell?[2]

LANE Yes, sir. [*Hands them on a salver.*]

ALGERNON [*Inspects them, takes two, and sits down on the sofa.*] Oh! . . . by the way, Lane, I see from your book[3] that on Thursday night, when Lord Shoreham and Mr. Worthing were dining with me, eight bottles of champagne are entered as having been consumed.

LANE Yes, sir; eight bottles and a pint.

ALGERNON Why is it that at a bachelor's establishment the servants invariably drink the champagne? I ask merely for information.

LANE I attribute it to the superior quality of the wine, sir. I have often observed that in married households the champagne is rarely of a first-rate brand.

ALGERNON Good Heavens! Is marriage so demoralizing as that?

LANE I believe it *is* a very pleasant state, sir. I have had very little experience of it myself up to the present. I have only been married once. That was in consequence of a misunderstanding between myself and a young person.

ALGERNON [*Languidly.*] I don't know that I am much interested in your family life, Lane.

LANE No, sir; it is not a very interesting subject. I never think of it myself.

ALGERNON Very natural, I am sure. That will do, Lane, thank you.

LANE Thank you, sir. [LANE *goes out.*]

ALGERNON Lane's views on marriage seem somewhat lax. Really, if the lower orders don't set us a good example, what on earth is the use of them? They seem, as a class, to have absolutely no sense of moral responsibility.

[*Enter* LANE .]

LANE Mr. Ernest Worthing.

[*Enter* JACK.] [LANE *goes out.*]

ALGERNON How are you, my dear Ernest? What brings you up to town?

JACK Oh, pleasure, pleasure! What else should bring one anywhere? Eating as usual, I see, Algy!

ALGERNON [*Stiffly.*] I believe it is customary in good society to take some slight refreshment at five o'clock. Where have you been since last Thursday?

JACK [*Sitting down on the sofa.*] In the country.

ALGERNON What on earth do you do there?

JACK [*Pulling off his gloves.*] When one is in town one amuses oneself. When one is in the country one amuses other people. It is excessively boring.

ALGERNON And who are the people you amuse?

JACK [*Airily.*] Oh, neighbours, neighbours.

ALGERNON Got nice neighbours in your part of Shropshire?

JACK Perfectly horrid! Never speak to one of them.

ALGERNON How immensely you must amuse them! [*Goes over and takes sandwich.*] By the way, Shropshire is your county, is it not?

JACK Eh? Shropshire?[4] Yes, of course. Hallo! Why all these cups? Why cucumber sandwiches? Why such reckless extravagance in one so young? Who is coming to tea?

ALGERNON Oh! merely Aunt Augusta and Gwendolen.

JACK How perfectly delightful!

ALGERNON Yes, that is all very well; but I am afraid Aunt Augusta won't quite approve of your being here.

JACK May I ask why?

ALGERNON My dear fellow, the way you flirt with Gwendolen is perfectly disgraceful. It is almost as bad as the way Gwendolen flirts with you.

JACK I am in love with Gwendolen. I have come up to town expressly to propose to her.

ALGERNON I thought you had come up for pleasure? . . . I call that business.

JACK How utterly unromantic you are!

ALGERNON I really don't see anything romantic in proposing. It is very romantic to be in love. But there is nothing romantic about a definite proposal. Why, one may be accepted. One usually is, I believe. Then the excitement is all over. The very essence of romance is uncertainty. If ever I get married, I'll certainly try to forget the fact.

JACK I have no doubt about that, dear Algy. The Divorce Court was specially invented for people whose memories are so curiously constituted.

ALGERNON Oh! there is no use speculating on that subject. Divorces are made in Heaven—[JACK *puts out his hand to take a sandwich*. ALGERNON *at once interferes.*] Please don't touch the cucumber sandwiches. They are ordered specially for Aunt Augusta. [*Takes one and eats it.*]

JACK Well, you have been eating them all the time.

ALGERNON That is quite a different matter. She is my aunt. [*Takes plate from below.*] Have some bread and butter. The bread and butter is for Gwendolen. Gwendolen is devoted to bread and butter.

JACK [*Advancing to table and helping himself.*] And very good bread and butter it is too.

ALGERNON Well, my dear fellow, you need not eat as if you were going to eat it all. You behave as if you were married to her already. You are not married to her already, and I don't think you ever will be.

JACK Why on earth do you say that?

ALGERNON Well, in the first place, girls never marry the men they flirt with. Girls don't think it right.

JACK Oh, that is nonsense!

ALGERNON It isn't. It is a great truth. It accounts for the extraordinary number of bachelors that one sees all over the place. In the second place, I don't give my consent.

JACK Your consent!

ALGERNON My dear fellow, Gwendolen is my first cousin. And before I allow you to marry her, you will have to clear up the whole question of Cecily. [*Rings bell.*]

JACK Cecily! What on earth do you mean? What do you mean, Algy, by Cecily? I don't know anyone of the name of Cecily.

[*Enter* LANE .]

ALGERNON Bring me that cigarette case Mr. Worthing left in the smoking-room the last time he dined here.

LANE Yes, sir. [LANE *goes out.*]

JACK Do you mean to say you have had my cigarette case all this time? I wish to goodness you had let me know. I have been writing frantic letters to Scotland Yard[5] about it. I was very nearly offering a large reward.

ALGERNON Well, I wish you would offer one. I happen to be more than usually hard up.[6]

JACK There is no good offering a large reward now that the thing is found.

[*Enter* LANE *with the cigarette case on a salver.* ALGERNON *takes it at once*. LANE *goes out.*]

ALGERNON I think that is rather mean of you, Ernest, I must say. [*Opens case and examines it.*] However, it makes no matter, for,

now that I look at the inscription inside, I find that the thing isn't yours after all.

JACK Of course it's mine. [*Moving to him.*] You have seen me with it a hundred times, and you have no right whatsoever to read what is written inside. It is a very ungentlemanly thing to read a private cigarette case.

ALGERNON Oh! it is absurd to have a hard-and-fast rule about what one should read and what one shouldn't. More than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn't read.

JACK I am quite aware of the fact, and I don't propose to discuss modern culture. It isn't the sort of thing one should talk of in private. I simply want my cigarette case back.

ALGERNON Yes; but this isn't your cigarette case. This cigarette case is a present from someone of the name of Cecily, and you said you didn't know anyone of that name.

JACK Well, if you want to know, Cecily happens to be my aunt.

ALGERNON Your aunt!

JACK Yes. Charming old lady she is, too. Lives at Tunbridge Wells.[7] Just give it back to me, Algy.

ALGERNON [*Retreating to back of sofa.*] But why does she call herself little Cecily if she is your aunt and lives at Tunbridge Wells? [*Reading.*] "From little Cecily with her fondest love."

JACK [*Moving to sofa and kneeling upon it.*] My dear fellow, what on earth is there in that? Some aunts are tall, some aunts are not tall. That is a matter that surely an aunt may be allowed to decide for herself. You seem to think that every aunt should be exactly like your aunt! That is absurd! For Heaven's sake give me back my cigarette case. [*Follows Algy round the room.*]

ALGERNON Yes. But why does your aunt call you her uncle? "From little Cecily, with her fondest love to her dear Uncle Jack." There is no objection, I admit, to an aunt being a small aunt, but why an aunt, no matter what her size may be, should call her own nephew her uncle, I can't quite make out. Besides, your name isn't Jack at all; it is Ernest.

JACK It isn't Ernest; it's Jack.

ALGERNON You have always told me it was Ernest. I have introduced you to everyone as Ernest. You answer to the name of Ernest. You look as if your name was Ernest. You are the most earnest looking person I ever saw in my life. It is perfectly absurd your saying that your name isn't Ernest. It's on your cards. Here is one of them. [*Taking it from case.*] "Mr. Ernest Worthing, B. 4, The Albany."[8] I'll keep this as a proof that your name is Ernest if ever you attempt to deny it to me, or to Gwendolen, or to anyone else. [*Puts the card in his pocket.*]

JACK Well, my name is Ernest in town and Jack in the country, and the cigarette case was given to me in the country.

ALGERNON Yes, but that does not account for the fact that your small Aunt Cecily, who lives at Tunbridge Wells, calls you her dear uncle. Come, old boy, you had much better have the thing out at once.

JACK My dear Algy, you talk exactly as if you were a dentist. It is very vulgar to talk like a dentist when one isn't a dentist. It produces a false impression.

ALGERNON Well, that is exactly what dentists always do. Now, go on! Tell me the whole thing. I may mention that I have always suspected you of being a confirmed and secret Bunburyist; and I am quite sure of it now.

JACK Bunburyist? What on earth do you mean by a Bunburyist?

ALGERNON I'll reveal to you the meaning of that incomparable expression as soon as you are kind enough to inform me why you are Ernest in town and Jack in the country.

JACK Well, produce my cigarette case first.

ALGERNON Here it is. [*Hands cigarette case.*] Now produce your explanation, and pray make it improbable. [*Sits on sofa.*]

JACK My dear fellow, there is nothing improbable about my explanation at all. In fact it's perfectly ordinary. Old Mr. Thomas Cardew, who adopted me when I was a little boy, made me in his will guardian to his granddaughter, Miss Cecily Cardew. Cecily, who addresses me as her uncle from motives of respect that you could

not possibly appreciate, lives at my place in the country under the charge of her admirable governess, Miss Prism.

ALGERNON Where is that place in the country, by the way?

JACK That is nothing to you, dear boy. You are not going to be invited. . . . I may tell you candidly that the place is not in Shropshire.

ALGERNON I suspected that, my dear fellow! I have Bunburyed all over Shropshire on two separate occasions. Now, go on. Why are you Ernest in town and Jack in the country?

JACK My dear Algy, I don't know whether you will be able to understand my real motives. You are hardly serious enough. When one is placed in the position of guardian, one has to adopt a very high moral tone on all subjects. It's one's duty to do so. And as a high moral tone can hardly be said to conduce very much to either one's health or one's happiness, in order to get up to town I have always pretended to have a younger brother of the name of Ernest, who lives in the Albany, and gets into the most dreadful scrapes. That, my dear Algy, is the whole truth pure and simple.

ALGERNON The truth is rarely pure and never simple. Modern life would be very tedious if it were either, and modern literature a complete impossibility!

JACK That wouldn't be at all a bad thing.

ALGERNON Literary criticism is not your forte, my dear fellow. Don't try it. You should leave that to people who haven't been at a University. They do it so well in the daily papers. What you really are is a Bunburyist. I was quite right in saying you were a Bunburyist. You are one of the most advanced Bunburyists I know.

JACK What on earth do you mean?

ALGERNON You have invented a very useful young brother called Ernest, in order that you may be able to come up to town as often as you like. I have invented an invaluable permanent invalid called Bunbury, in order that I may be able to go down into the country whenever I choose. Bunbury is perfectly invaluable. If it wasn't for Bunbury's extraordinary bad health, for instance, I wouldn't be

able to dine with you at Willis's tonight, for I have been really engaged[9] to Aunt Augusta for more than a week.

JACK I haven't asked you to dine with me anywhere tonight.

ALGERNON I know. You are absurdly careless about sending out invitations. It is very foolish of you. Nothing annoys people so much as not receiving invitations.

JACK You had much better dine with your Aunt Augusta.

ALGERNON I haven't the smallest intention of doing anything of the kind. To begin with, I dined there on Monday, and once a week is quite enough to dine with one's own relations. In the second place, whenever I do dine there I am always treated as a member of the family, and sent down with[1] either no woman at all, or two. In the third place, I know perfectly well whom she will place me next to, tonight. She will place me next Mary Farquhar, who always flirts with her own husband across the dinner table. That is not very pleasant. Indeed, it is not even decent . . . and that sort of thing is enormously on the increase. The amount of women in London who flirt with their own husbands is perfectly scandalous. It looks so bad. It is simply washing one's clean linen in public. Besides, now that I know you to be a confirmed Bunburyist, I naturally want to talk to you about Bunburying. I want to tell you the rules.

JACK I'm not a Bunburyist at all. If Gwendolen accepts me, I am going to kill my brother, indeed I think I'll kill him in any case. Cecily is a little too much interested in him. It is rather a bore. So I am going to get rid of Ernest. And I strongly advise you to do the same with Mr. . . . with your invalid friend who has the absurd name.

ALGERNON Nothing will induce me to part with Bunbury, and if you ever get married, which seems to me extremely problematic, you will be very glad to know Bunbury. A man who marries without knowing Bunbury has a very tedious time of it.

JACK That is nonsense. If I marry a charming girl like Gwendolen, and she is the only girl I ever saw in my life that I would marry, I certainly won't want to know Bunbury.

ALGERNON Then your wife will. You don't seem to realize, that in married life three is company and two is none.

JACK [*Sententiously.*] That, my dear young friend, is the theory that the corrupt French Drama has been propounding for the last fifty years.[2]

ALGERNON Yes; and that the happy English home has proved in half the time.

JACK For heaven's sake, don't try to be cynical. It's perfectly easy to be cynical.

ALGERNON My dear fellow, it isn't easy to be anything nowadays. There's such a lot of beastly competition about. [*The sound of an electric bell is heard.*] Ah! that must be Aunt Augusta. Only relatives, or creditors, ever ring in that Wagnerian manner.[3] Now, if I get her out of the way for ten minutes, so that you can have an opportunity for proposing to Gwendolen, may I dine with you tonight at Willis's?

JACK I suppose so, if you want to.

ALGERNON Yes, but you must be serious about it. I hate people who are not serious about meals. It is so shallow of them.

[*Enter* LANE .]

LANE Lady Bracknell and Miss Fairfax.

[ALGERNON *goes forward to meet them. Enter* LADY BRACKNELL *and* GWENDOLEN.]

LADY BRACKNELL Good afternoon, dear Algernon, I hope you are behaving very well.

ALGERNON I'm feeling very well, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL That's not quite the same thing. In fact the two things rarely go together. [*Sees* JACK *and bows to him with icy coldness.*]

ALGERNON [*To*gwendolen.] Dear me, you are smart![4]

GWENDOLEN I am always smart! Aren't I, Mr. Worthing?

JACK You're quite perfect, Miss Fairfax.

GWENDOLEN Oh! I hope I am not that. It would leave no room for developments, and I intend to develop in many directions.

[GWENDOLEN *and* JACK *sit down together in the corner.*]

LADY BRACKNELL I'm sorry if we are a little late, Algernon, but I was obliged to call on dear Lady Harbury. I hadn't been there since her poor husband's death. I never saw a woman so altered; she looks quite twenty years younger. And now I'll have a cup of tea, and one of those nice cucumber sandwiches you promised me.

ALGERNON Certainly, Aunt Augusta. [*Goes over to tea-table.*]

LADY BRACKNELL Won't you come and sit here, Gwendolen?

GWENDOLEN Thanks, mamma,[5] I'm quite comfortable where I am.

ALGERNON [*Picking up empty plate in horror.*] Good heavens! Lane! Why are there no cucumber sandwiches? I ordered them specially.

LANE [*Gravely.*] There were no cucumbers in the market this morning, sir. I went down twice.

ALGERNON No cucumbers!

LANE No, sir. Not even for ready money.[6]

ALGERNON That will do, Lane, thank you.

LANE Thank you, sir.

ALGERNON I am greatly distressed, Aunt Augusta, about there being no cucumbers, not even for ready money.

LADY BRACKNELL It really makes no matter, Algernon. I had some crumpets[7] with Lady Harbury, who seems to me to be living entirely for pleasure now.

ALGERNON I hear her hair has turned quite gold from grief.

LADY BRACKNELL It certainly has changed its colour. From what cause I, of course, cannot say. [ALGERNON *crosses and hands tea.*] Thank you. I've quite a treat for you tonight, Algernon. I am going to send you down with Mary Farquhar. She is such a nice woman, and so attentive to her husband. It's delightful to watch them.

ALGERNON I am afraid, Aunt Augusta, I shall have to give up the pleasure of dining with you tonight after all.

LADY BRACKNELL [*Frowning.*] I hope not, Algernon. It would put my table completely out. Your uncle would have to dine upstairs.[8] Fortunately he is accustomed to that.

ALGERNON It is a great bore, and, I need hardly say, a terrible disappointment to me, but the fact is I have just had a telegram

to say that my poor friend Bunbury is very ill again. [*Exchanges glances with* JACK.] They seem to think I should be with him.

LADY BRACKNELL It is very strange. This Mr. Bunbury seems to suffer from curiously bad health.

ALGERNON Yes; poor Bunbury is a dreadful invalid.

LADY BRACKNELL Well, I must say, Algernon, that I think it is high time that Mr. Bunbury made up his mind whether he was going to live or to die. This shilly-shallying with the question is absurd. Nor do I in any way approve of the modern sympathy with invalids. I consider it morbid. Illness of any kind is hardly a thing to be encouraged in others. Health is the primary duty of life. I am always telling that to your poor uncle, but he never seems to take much notice . . . as far as any improvement in his ailments goes. I should be obliged if you would ask Mr. Bunbury, from me, to be kind enough not to have a relapse on Saturday, for I rely on you to arrange my music for me. It is my last reception, and one wants something that will encourage conversation, particularly at the end of the season[9] when everyone has practically said whatever they had to say, which, in most cases, was probably not much.

ALGERNON I'll speak to Bunbury, Aunt Augusta, if he is still conscious, and I think I can promise you he'll be all right by Saturday. Of course the music is a great difficulty. You see, if one plays good music, people don't listen, and if one plays bad music, people don't talk. But I'll run over the program I've drawn out, if you will kindly come into the next room for a moment.

LADY BRACKNELL Thank you, Algernon. It is very thoughtful of you. [*Rising, and following* ALGERNON .] I'm sure the program will be delightful, after a few expurgations. French songs I cannot possibly allow. People always seem to think that they are improper, and either look shocked, which is vulgar, or laugh, which is worse. But German sounds a thoroughly respectable language, and indeed, I believe is so. Gwendolen, you will accompany me.

GWENDOLEN Certainly, mamma.

[LADY BRACKNELL *and* ALGERNON *go into the music room*, GWENDOLEN *remains behind.*]

JACK Charming day it has been, Miss Fairfax.

GWENDOLEN Pray don't talk to me about the weather, Mr. Worthing. Whenever people talk to me about the weather, I always feel quite certain that they mean something else. And that makes me so nervous.

JACK I do mean something else.

GWENDOLEN I thought so. In fact, I am never wrong.

JACK And I would like to be allowed to take advantage of Lady Bracknell's temporary absence . . .

GWENDOLEN I would certainly advise you to do so. Mamma has a way of coming back suddenly into a room that I have often had to speak to her about.

JACK [*Nervously.*] Miss Fairfax, ever since I met you I have admired you more than any girl . . . I have ever met since . . . I met you.

GWENDOLEN Yes, I am quite aware of the fact. And I often wish that in public, at any rate, you had been more demonstrative. For me you have always had an irresistible fascination. Even before I met you I was far from indifferent to you. [JACK *looks at her in amazement.*] We live, as I hope you know, Mr. Worthing, in an age of ideals. The fact is constantly mentioned in the more expensive monthly magazines, and has reached the provincial pulpits, I am told: and my ideal has always been to love someone of the name of Ernest. There is something in that name that inspires absolute confidence. The moment Algernon first mentioned to me that he had a friend called Ernest, I knew I was destined to love you.

JACK You really love me, Gwendolen?

GWENDOLEN Passionately!

JACK Darling! You don't know how happy you've made me.

GWENDOLEN My own Ernest!

JACK But you don't really mean to say that you couldn't love me if my name wasn't Ernest?

GWENDOLEN But your name is Ernest.

JACK Yes, I know it is. But supposing it was something else? Do you mean to say you couldn't love me then?

GWENDOLEN [*Glibly.*] Ah! that is clearly a metaphysical speculation, and like most metaphysical speculations has very little reference at all to the actual facts of real life, as we know them.

JACK Personally, darling, to speak quite candidly, I don't much care about the name of Ernest . . . I don't think the name suits me at all.

GWENDOLEN It suits you perfectly. It is a divine name. It has a music of its own. It produces vibrations.

JACK Well, really, Gwendolen, I must say that I think there are lots of other much nicer names. I think Jack, for instance, a charming name.

GWendolen Jack? . . . No, there is very little music in the name Jack, if any at all, indeed. It does not thrill. It produces absolutely no vibrations. . . . I have known several Jacks, and they all, without exception, were more than usually plain. Besides, Jack is a notorious domesticity for John! And I pity any woman who is married to a man called John. She would probably never be allowed to know the entrancing pleasure of a single moment's solitude. The only really safe name is Ernest.

JACK Gwendolen, I must get christened at once—I mean we must get married at once. There is no time to be lost.

GWENDOLEN Married, Mr. Worthing?

JACK [*Astounded.*] Well . . . surely. You know that I love you, and you led me to believe, Miss Fairfax, that you were not absolutely indifferent to me.

GWENDOLEN I adore you. But you haven't proposed to me yet. Nothing has been said at all about marriage. The subject has not even been touched on.

JACK Well . . . may I propose to you now?

GWENDOLEN I think it would be an admirable opportunity. And to spare you any possible disappointment, Mr. Worthing, I think it only fair to tell you quite frankly beforehand that I am fully determined to accept you.

JACK Gwendolen!

GWENDOLEN Yes, Mr. Worthing, what have you got to say to me?

JACK You know what I have got to say to you.

GWENDOLEN Yes, but you don't say it.

JACK Gwendolen, will you marry me? [*Goes on his knees.*]

GWENDOLEN Of course I will, darling. How long you have been about it! I am afraid you have had very little experience in how to propose.

JACK My own one, I have never loved anyone in the world but you.

GWENDOLEN Yes, but men often propose for practice. I know my brother Gerald does. All my girlfriends tell me so. What wonderfully blue eyes you have, Ernest! They are quite, quite blue. I hope you will always look at me just like that, especially when there are other people present.

[*Enter* LADY BRACKNELL .]

LADY BRACKNELL Mr. Worthing! Rise, sir, from this semi-recumbent posture. It is most indecorous.

GWENDOLEN Mamma! [*He tries to rise; she restrains him.*] I must beg you to retire. This is no place for you. Besides, Mr. Worthing has not quite finished yet.

LADY BRACKNELL Finished what, may I ask?

GWENDOLEN I am engaged to Mr. Worthing, mamma.

[*They rise together.*]

LADY BRACKNELL Pardon me, you are not engaged to anyone. When you do become engaged to someone, I, or your father, should his health permit him, will inform you of the fact. An engagement should come on a young girl as a surprise, pleasant or unpleasant, as the case may be. It is hardly a matter that she could be allowed to arrange for herself. . . . And now I have a few questions to put to you, Mr. Worthing. While I am making these inquiries, you, Gwendolen, will wait for me below in the carriage.

GWENDOLEN [*Reproachfully.*] Mamma!

LADY BRACKNELL In the carriage, Gwendolen! [GWENDOLEN *goes to the door. She and* JACK *blow kisses to each other behind* LADY BRACKNELL *'s back.* LADY BRACKNELL *looks vaguely about as if she could not understand what the noise was. Finally turns round.*] Gwendolen, the carriage!

GWENDOLEN Yes, mamma. [*Goes out, looking back at* JACK.]

LADY BRACKNELL [*Sitting down.*] You can take a seat, Mr. Worthing.

[*Looks in her pocket for notebook and pencil.*]

JACK Thank you, Lady Bracknell, I prefer standing.

LADY BRACKNELL [*Pencil and notebook in hand.*] I feel bound to tell you that you are not down on my list of eligible young men, although I have the same list as the dear Duchess of Bolton has. We work together, in fact. However, I am quite ready to enter your name, should your answers be what a really affectionate mother requires. Do you smoke?

JACK Well, yes, I must admit I smoke.

LADY BRACKNELL I am glad to hear it. A man should always have an occupation of some kind. There are far too many idle men in London as it is. How old are you?

JACK Twenty-nine.

LADY BRACKNELL A very good age to be married at. I have always been of opinion that a man who desires to get married should know either everything or nothing. Which do you know?

JACK [*After some hesitation.*] I know nothing, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL I am pleased to hear it. I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square.[1] What is your income?

JACK Between seven and eight thousand a year.

LADY BRACKNELL [*Makes a note in her book.*] In land, or in investments?

JACK In investments, chiefly.

LADY BRACKNELL That is satisfactory. What between the duties expected of one during one's lifetime, and the duties exacted from one after one's death,[2] land has ceased to be either a profit or a pleasure. It gives one position, and prevents one from keeping it up. That's all that can be said about land.

JACK I have a country house with some land, of course, attached to it, about fifteen hundred acres, I believe; but I don't depend on that for my real income. In fact, as far as I can make out, the poachers are the only people who make anything out of it.

LADY BRACKNELL A country house! How many bedrooms? Well, that point can be cleared up afterwards. You have a town house, I hope? A girl with a simple, unspoiled nature, like Gwendolen, could hardly be expected to reside in the country.

JACK Well, I own a house in Belgrave Square,[3] but it is let by the year to Lady Bloxham. Of course, I can get it back whenever I like, at six months' notice.

LADY BRACKNELL Lady Bloxham? I don't know her.

JACK Oh, she goes about very little. She is a lady considerably advanced in years.

LADY BRACKNELL Ah, nowadays that is no guarantee of respectability of character. What number in Belgrave Square?

JACK 149.

LADY BRACKNELL [*Shaking her head.*] The unfashionable side. I thought there was something. However, that could easily be altered.

JACK Do you mean the fashion, or the side?

LADY BRACKNELL [*Sternly.*] Both, if necessary, I presume. What are your politics?

JACK Well, I am afraid I really have none. I am a Liberal Unionist.[4]

LADY BRACKNELL Oh, they count as Tories. They dine with us. Or come in the evening, at any rate. Now to minor matters. Are your parents living?

JACK I have lost both my parents.

LADY BRACKNELL Both? To lose one parent may be regarded as a misfortune—to lose *both* seems like carelessness. Who was your father? He was evidently a man of some wealth. Was he born in what the Radical papers call the purple of commerce, or did he rise from the ranks of aristocracy?

JACK I am afraid I really don't know. The fact is, Lady Bracknell, I said I had lost my parents. It would be nearer the truth to say that

my parents seem to have lost me. . . . I don't actually know who I am by birth. I was . . . well, I was found.

LADY BRACKNELL Found!

JACK The late Mr. Thomas Cardew, an old gentleman of a very charitable and kindly disposition, found me, and gave me the name of Worthing, because he happened to have a first-class ticket for Worthing in his pocket at the time. Worthing is a place in Sussex. It is a seaside resort.

LADY BRACKNELL Where did the charitable gentleman who had a first-class ticket for this seaside resort find you?

JACK [*Gravely.*] In a handbag.

LADY BRACKNELL A handbag?

JACK [*Very seriously.*] Yes, Lady Bracknell. I was in a handbag—a somewhat large, black leather handbag, with handles to it—an ordinary handbag, in fact.

LADY BRACKNELL In what locality did this Mr. James, or Thomas, Cardew come across this ordinary handbag?

JACK In the cloak room at Victoria Station. It was given to him in mistake for his own.[5]

LADY BRACKNELL The cloak room at Victoria Station?

JACK Yes. The Brighton line.

LADY BRACKNELL The line is immaterial. Mr. Worthing, I confess I feel somewhat bewildered by what you have just told me. To be born, or at any rate, bred in a handbag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that reminds one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution. And I presume you know what that unfortunate movement led to? As for the particular locality in which the handbag was found, a cloak room at a railway station might serve to conceal a social indiscretion—has probably, indeed, been used for that purpose before now—but it could hardly be regarded as an assured basis for a recognized position in good society.

JACK May I ask you then what you would advise me to do? I need hardly say I would do anything in the world to ensure Gwendolen's happiness.

LADY BRACKNELL I would strongly advise you, Mr. Worthing, to try and acquire some relations as soon as possible, and to make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over.[6]

JACK Well, I don't see how I could possibly manage to do that. I can produce the handbag at any moment, it is in my dressing room at home. I really think that should satisfy you, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL Me, sir! What has it to do with me? You can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our only daughter—a girl brought up with the utmost care—to marry into a cloak room, and form an alliance with a parcel? Good morning, Mr. Worthing!

[LADY BRACKNELL *sweeps out in majestic indignation.*]

JACK Good morning! [ALGERNON, *from the other room, strikes up the Wedding March*. JACK *looks perfectly furious, and goes to the door.*] For goodness' sake don't play that ghastly tune, Algy! How idiotic you are!

[*The music stops, and* ALGERNON *Enters cheerily.*]

ALGERNON Didn't it go off all right, old boy? You don't mean to say Gwendolen refused you? I know it is a way she has. She is always refusing people. I think it is most ill-natured of her.

JACK Oh, Gwendolen is as right as a trivet.[7] As far as she is concerned, we are engaged. Her mother is perfectly unbearable. Never met such a Gorgon[8] . . . I don't really know what a Gorgon is like, but I am quite sure that Lady Bracknell is one. In any case, she is a monster, without being a myth, which is rather unfair . . . I beg your pardon, Algy, I suppose I shouldn't talk about your own aunt in that way before you.

ALGERNON My dear boy, I love hearing my relations abused. It is the only thing that makes me put up with them at all. Relations are simply a tedious pack of people who haven't got the remotest knowledge of how to live, nor the smallest instinct about when to die.

JACK Oh, that is nonsense!

ALGERNON It isn't!

JACK Well, I won't argue about the matter. You always want to argue about things.

ALGERNON That is exactly what things were originally made for.

JACK Upon my word, if I thought that, I'd shoot myself . . . [*A pause.*] You don't think there is any chance of Gwendolen becoming like her mother in about a hundred and fifty years, do you, Algy?

ALGERNON All women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That's his.

JACK Is that clever?

ALGERNON It is perfectly phrased! and quite as true as any observation in civilized life should be.

JACK I am sick to death of cleverness. Everybody is clever nowadays. You can't go anywhere without meeting clever people. The thing has become an absolute public nuisance. I wish to goodness we had a few fools left.

ALGERNON We have.

JACK I should extremely like to meet them. What do they talk about?

ALGERNON The fools? Oh! about the clever people, of course.

JACK What fools!

ALGERNON By the way, did you tell Gwendolen the truth about your being Ernest in town, and Jack in the country?

JACK [*In a very patronizing manner.*] My dear fellow, the truth isn't quite the sort of thing one tells to a nice sweet refined girl. What extraordinary ideas you have about the way to behave to a woman!

ALGERNON The only way to behave to a woman is to make love to[9] her, if she is pretty, and to someone else if she is plain.

JACK Oh, that is nonsense.

ALGERNON What about your brother? What about the profligate Ernest?

JACK Oh, before the end of the week I shall have got rid of him. I'll say he died in Paris of apoplexy. Lots of people die of apoplexy, quite suddenly, don't they?

ALGERNON Yes, but it's hereditary, my dear fellow. It's a sort of thing that runs in families. You had much better say a severe chill.

JACK You are sure a severe chill isn't hereditary, or anything of that kind?

ALGERNON Of course it isn't!

JACK Very well, then. My poor brother Ernest is carried off suddenly in Paris, by a severe chill. That gets rid of him.[1]

ALGERNON But I thought you said that . . . Miss Cardew was a little too much interested in your poor brother Ernest? Won't she feel his loss a good deal?

JACK Oh, that is all right. Cecily is not a silly romantic girl, I am glad to say. She has got a capital appetite, goes on long walks, and pays no attention at all to her lessons.

ALGERNON I would rather like to see Cecily.

JACK I will take very good care you never do. She is excessively pretty, and she is only just eighteen.

ALGERNON Have you told Gwendolen yet that you have an excessively pretty ward who is only just eighteen?

JACK Oh! one doesn't blurt these things out to people. Cecily and Gwendolen are perfectly certain to be extremely great friends. I'll bet you anything you like that half an hour after they have met, they will be calling each other sister.

ALGERNON Women only do that when they have called each other a lot of other things first. Now, my dear boy, if we want to get a good table at Willis's, we really must go and dress. Do you know it is nearly seven?

JACK [*Irritably.*] Oh! it always is nearly seven.

ALGERNON Well, I'm hungry.

JACK I never knew you when you weren't. . . .

ALGERNON What shall we do after dinner? Go to the theatre?

JACK Oh no! I loathe listening.

ALGERNON Well, let us go to the club?

JACK Oh, no! I hate talking.

ALGERNON Well, we might trot around to the Empire[2] at ten?

JACK Oh no! I can't bear looking at things. It is so silly.

ALGERNON Well, what shall we do?

JACK Nothing!

ALGERNON It is awfully hard work doing nothing. However, I don't mind hard work where there is no definite object of any kind.

[*Enter* LANE .]

LANE Miss Fairfax.

[*Enter* GWENDOLEN. LANE *goes out.*]

ALGERNON Gwendolen, upon my word!

GWENDOLEN Algy, kindly turn your back. I have something very particular to say to Mr. Worthing.

ALGERNON Really, Gwendolen, I don't think I can allow this at all.

GWENDOLEN Algy, you always adopt a strictly immoral attitude towards life. You are not quite old enough to do that. [ALGERNON *retires to the fireplace.*]

JACK My own darling!

GWENDOLEN Ernest, we may never be married. From the expression on mamma's face I fear we never shall. Few parents nowadays pay any regard to what their children say to them. The old-fashioned respect for the young is fast dying out. Whatever influence I ever had over mamma, I lost at the age of three. But although she may prevent us from becoming man and wife, and I may marry someone else, and marry often, nothing that she can possibly do can alter my eternal devotion to you.

JACK Dear Gwendolen!

GWENDOLEN The story of your romantic origin, as related to me by mamma, with unpleasing comments, has naturally stirred the deeper fibres of my nature. Your Christian name has an irresistible fascination. The simplicity of your character makes you exquisitely incomprehensible to me. Your town address at the Albany I have. What is your address in the country?

JACK The Manor House, Woolton, Hertfordshire.

[ALGERNON, *who has been carefully listening, smiles to himself, and writes the address on his shirt-cuff.*[3] *Then picks up the Railway Guide.*]

GWENDOLEN There is a good postal service, I suppose? It may be necessary to do something desperate. That of course will require serious consideration. I will communicate with you daily.

JACK My own one!

GWENDOLEN How long do you remain in town?

JACK Till Monday.

GWENDOLEN Good! Algy, you may turn round now.

ALGERNON Thanks, I've turned round already.

GWENDOLEN You may also ring the bell.

JACK You will let me see you to your carriage, my own darling?

GWENDOLEN Certainly.

JACK [*To* LANE, *who now enters.*] I will see Miss Fairfax out.

LANE Yes, sir. [JACK *and* GWENDOLEN *go off.*]

[LANE *presents several letters on a salver to* ALGERNON . *It is to be surmised that they are bills, as* ALGERNON *after looking at the envelopes, tears them up.*]

ALGERNON A glass of sherry, Lane.

LANE Yes, sir.

ALGERNON Tomorrow, Lane, I'm going Bunburying.

LANE Yes, sir.

ALGERNON I shall probably not be back till Monday. You can put up my dress clothes, my smoking jacket,[4] and all the Bunbury suits . . .

LANE Yes, sir. [*Handing sherry.*]

ALGERNON I hope tomorrow will be a fine day, Lane.

LANE It never is, sir.

ALGERNON Lane, you're a perfect pessimist.

LANE I do my best to give satisfaction, sir.

[*Enter* JACK. LANE *goes off.*]

JACK There's a sensible, intellectual girl! the only girl I ever cared for in my life. [ALGERNON *is laughing immoderately.*] What on earth are you so amused at?

ALGERNON Oh, I'm a little anxious about poor Bunbury, that is all.

JACK If you don't take care, your friend Bunbury will get you into a serious scrape some day.

ALGERNON I love scrapes. They are the only things that are never serious.

JACK Oh, that's nonsense, Algy. You never talk anything but nonsense.

ALGERNON Nobody ever does.

[JACK *looks indignantly at him, and leaves the room.* ALGERNON *lights a cigarette, reads his shirt-cuff, and smiles.*]

ACT-DROP[5]

Endnotes

- Note 1: A highly fashionable location (at the time of the play) in the West End of London.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Bracknell is the name of a place in Berkshire where the mother of Lord Alfred Douglas had her summer home, which Wilde had visited.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Cellar book, in which records were kept of wines.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: As we learn later, the estate is in Hertfordshire, a long distance from Shropshire. In the four-act version of the play, when this discrepancy is pointed out by Algernon, Jack replies: "My dear fellow! Surely you don't expect me to be accurate about geography? No gentleman is accurate about geography. Why, I got a prize for geography when I was at school. I can't be expected to know anything about it now."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Police headquarters in London.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Short of money.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A fashionable resort town south of London.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A former residence of the Duke of Albany (brother of George IV) near Piccadilly that had been converted to elegant apartments.Return to reference 8

- Note 9: That is, committed to attend her dinner party. "Willis's": a first-class restaurant in the vicinity of St. James's Street, in the center of London.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, required to escort, as a dinner partner.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Almost all the plays by the leading French playwrights of the second half of the 19th century (Alexandre Dumas *fils*, Émile Augier, and Victorien Sardou) focus on marital infidelity. As Brander Matthews, an American critic, noted in 1882, "the trio—husband, wife, and lover" had become "almost universal" in the French theater.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Insistently loud, like some of the music in the large-scale operas of Richard Wagner (1813–1883).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Elegantly fashionable.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Pronounced with the accent on the second syllable.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Immediate payment in cash (rather than on credit).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Round griddle breads, served toasted.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Because otherwise she would have more women than men at the table.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The social season, extending from May through July, when people of fashion came into London from their country estates for entertainments and parties.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A fashionable residential area in the West End of London.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The wordplay is on "death duties"—that is, inheritance taxes.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Another fashionable residential area in the West End.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A splinter group of members of the Liberal Party who in 1886, led by Joseph Chamberlain, joined forces with the Conservative Party (the "Tories") in opposing home rule for Ireland.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: In the four-act version of the play, Jack explains further what happened to Mr. Cardew: "He did not discover the error till he arrived at his own house. All subsequent efforts to ascertain who I was were unavailing."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In the four-act version of the play, Jack later comments to Algernon about Lady Bracknell's demands about locating parents: "After all what does it matter whether a man has ever had a father and mother or not? Mothers, of course, are all right. They pay a chap's bills and don't bother him. But fathers bother a chap and never pay his bills. I don't know a single chap at the club who speaks to his father." And Algernon remarks: "Yes. Fathers are certainly not popular just at present. . . . They are like these chaps, the minor poets. They are never quoted."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Proverbial expression meaning reliably steady, like a tripod ("trivet") used to support pots over a fire.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: In classical mythology a snake-haired female monster; at the sight of her, other creatures turned to stone.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Woo, court.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In the four-act version of the play, Jack explains further: "I'll wear mourning for him, of course; that would be only decent. I don't at all mind wearing mourning. I think that all black, with a good pearl pin, rather smart. Then I'll go down home and break the news to my household."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A music hall in Leicester Square that featured light entertainment.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Because shirt cuffs were heavily starched they provided a good surface on which to make notes.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Coat worn when gentlemen assembled in a room designated for smoking. The object was to avoid contaminating their regular clothing with the smell of cigars or pipes, which was considered offensive to ladies. "Put up": pack up.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: A special curtain lowered during theatrical performances to denote intervals between acts or scenes.Return to reference 5

Second Act

SCENE—*Garden at the Manor House. A flight of grey stone steps leads up to the house. The garden, an old-fashioned one, full of roses. Time of year, July. Basket chairs, and a table covered with books, are set under a large yew tree.*

[MISS PRISM[6] *discovered seated at the table*. CECILY *is at the back watering flowers.*]

MISS PRISM [*Calling.*] Cecily, Cecily! Surely such a utilitarian occupation as the watering of flowers is rather Moulton's duty than yours? Especially at a moment when intellectual pleasures await you. Your German grammar is on the table. Pray open it at page fifteen. We will repeat yesterday's lesson.

CECILY [*Coming over very slowly.*] But I don't like German. It isn't at all a becoming language. I know perfectly well that I look quite plain after my German lesson.

MISS PRISM Child, you know how anxious your guardian is that you should improve yourself in every way. He laid particular stress on your German, as he was leaving for town yesterday. Indeed, he always lays stress on your German when he is leaving for town.

CECILY Dear Uncle Jack is so very serious! Sometime he is so serious that I think he cannot be quite well.

MISS PRISM [*Drawing herself up.*] Your guardian enjoys the best of health, and his gravity of demeanour is especially to be commended in one so comparatively young as he is. I know no one who has a higher sense of duty and responsibility.

CECILY I suppose that is why he often looks a little bored when we three are together.

MISS PRISM Cecily! I am surprised at you. Mr. Worthing has many troubles in his life. Idle merriment and triviality would be out of place in his conversation. You must remember his constant anxiety about that unfortunate young man his brother.

CECILY I wish Uncle Jack would allow that unfortunate young man, his brother, to come down here sometimes. We might have a good

influence over him, Miss Prism. I am sure you certainly would. You know German, and geology, and things of that kind influence a man very much. [CECILY *begins to write in her diary.*]

MISS PRISM [*Shaking her head.*] I do not think that even I could produce any effect on a character that according to his own brother's admission is irretrievably weak and vacillating. Indeed I am not sure that I would desire to reclaim him. I am not in favor of this modern mania for turning bad people into good people at a moment's notice. As a man sows so let him reap.[7] You must put away your diary, Cecily. I really don't see why you should keep a diary at all.

CECILY I keep a diary in order to enter the wonderful secrets of my life. If I didn't write them down I should probably forget all about them.

MISS PRISM Memory, my dear Cecily, is the diary that we all carry about with us.

CECILY Yes, but it usually chronicles the things that have never happened, and couldn't possibly have happened. I believe that Memory is responsible for nearly all the three-volume novels that Mudie[8] sends us.

MISS PRISM Do not speak slightingly of the three-volume novel, Cecily. I wrote one myself in earlier days.

CECILY Did you really, Miss Prism? How wonderfully clever you are! I hope it did not end happily? I don't like novels that end happily. They depress me so much.

MISS PRISM The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means.

CECILY I suppose so. But it seems very unfair. And was your novel ever published?

MISS PRISM Alas! no. The manuscript unfortunately was abandoned. I use the word in the sense of lost or mislaid. To your work, child, these speculations are profitless.

CECILY [*Smiling.*] But I see dear Dr. Chasuble[9] coming up through the garden.

MISS PRISM [*Rising and advancing.*] Dr. Chasuble! This is indeed a pleasure.

[*Enter* CANON CHASUBLE.]

CHASUBLE And how are we this morning? Miss Prism, you are, I trust, well?

CECILY Miss Prism has just been complaining of a slight headache. I think it would do her so much good to have a short stroll with you in the Park, Dr. Chasuble.

MISS PRISM Cecily, I have not mentioned anything about a headache.

CECILY No, dear Miss Prism, I know that, but I felt instinctively that you had a headache. Indeed I was thinking about that, and not about my German lesson, when the Rector came in.

CHASUBLE I hope, Cecily, you are not inattentive.

CECILY Oh, I am afraid I am.

CHASUBLE That is strange. Were I fortunate enough to be Miss Prism's pupil, I would hang upon her lips. [MISS PRISM *glares.*] I spoke metaphorically.—My metaphor was drawn from bees. Ahem! Mr. Worthing, I suppose, has not returned from town yet?

MISS PRISM We do not expect him till Monday afternoon.

CHASUBLE Ah yes, he usually likes to spend his Sunday in London. He is not one of those whose sole aim is enjoyment, as, by all accounts, that unfortunate young man his brother seems to be. But I must not disturb Egeria[1] and her pupil any longer.

MISS PRISM Egeria? My name is Laetitia, Doctor.

CHASUBLE [*Bowing.*] A classical allusion merely, drawn from the Pagan authors. I shall see you both no doubt at Evensong?[2]

MISS PRISM I think, dear Doctor, I will have a stroll with you. I find I have a headache after all, and a walk might do it good.

CHASUBLE With pleasure, Miss Prism, with pleasure. We might go as far as the schools and back.

MISS PRISM That would be delightful. Cecily, you will read your Political Economy[3] in my absence. The chapter on the Fall of the Rupee[4] you may omit. It is somewhat too sensational. Even these metallic problems have their melodramatic side. [*Goes down the garden with* DR. CHASUBLE.]

CECILY [*Picks up books and throws them back on table.*] Horrid Political Economy! Horrid Geography! Horrid, horrid German!

[*Enter* MERRIMAN *with a card on a salver.*]

MERRIMAN Mr. Ernest Worthing has just driven over from the station. He has brought his luggage with him.

CECILY [*Takes the card and reads it.*] "Mr. Ernest Worthing, B. 4, The Albany, W." Uncle Jack's brother! Did you tell him Mr. Worthing was in town?

MERRIMAN Yes, Miss. He seemed very much disappointed. I mentioned that you and Miss Prism were in the garden. He said he was anxious to speak to you privately for a moment.

CECILY. Ask Mr. Ernest Worthing to come here. I suppose you had better talk to the housekeeper about a room for him.

MERRIMAN Yes, Miss. [MERRIMAN *goes off.*]

CECILY I have never met any really wicked person before. I feel rather frightened. I am so afraid he will look just like everyone else. [*Enter* ALGERNON, *very gay and debonair.*] He does!

ALGERNON [*Raising his hat.*] You are my little cousin Cecily, I'm sure.

CECILY You are under some strange mistake. I am not little. In fact, I believe I am more than usually tall for my age. [ALGERNON *is rather taken aback.*] But I am your cousin Cecily. You, I see from your card, are Uncle Jack's brother, my cousin Ernest, my wicked cousin Ernest.

ALGERNON Oh! I am not really wicked at all, cousin Cecily. You mustn't think that I am wicked.

CECILY If you are not, then you have certainly been deceiving us all in a very inexcusable manner. I hope you have not been leading a double life, pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time. That would be hypocrisy.

ALGERNON [*Looks at her in amazement*] Oh! Of course I have been rather reckless.

CECILY I am glad to hear it.

ALGERNON In fact, now you mention the subject, I have been very bad in my own small way.

CECILY I don't think you should be so proud of that, though I am sure it must have been very pleasant.

ALGERNON It is much pleasanter being here with you.

CECILY I can't understand how you are here at all. Uncle Jack won't be back till Monday afternoon.

ALGERNON That is a great disappointment. I am obliged to go up by the first train on Monday morning. I have a business appointment that I am anxious . . . to miss.

CECILY Couldn't you miss it anywhere but in London?

ALGERNON No: the appointment is in London.

CECILY Well, I know, of course, how important it is not to keep a business engagement, if one wants to retain any sense of the beauty of life, but still I think you had better wait till Uncle Jack arrives. I know he wants to speak to you about your emigrating.

ALGERNON About my what?

CECILY Your emigrating. He has gone up to buy your outfit.

ALGERNON I certainly wouldn't let Jack buy my outfit. He has no taste in neckties at all.

CECILY I don't think you will require neckties. Uncle Jack is sending you to Australia.[5]

ALGERNON Australia? I'd sooner die.

CECILY Well, he said at dinner on Wednesday night, that you would have to choose between this world, the next world, and Australia.

ALGERNON Oh, well! The accounts I have received of Australia and the next world are not particularly encouraging. This world is good enough for me, cousin Cecily.

CECILY Yes, but are you good enough for it?

ALGERNON I'm afraid I'm not that. That is why I want you to reform me. You might make that your mission, if you don't mind, cousin Cecily.

CECILY I'm afraid I've no time, this afternoon.

ALGERNON Well, would you mind my reforming myself this afternoon?

CECILY It is rather Quixotic of you. But I think you should try.

ALGERNON I will. I feel better already.

CECILY You are looking a little worse.

ALGERNON That is because I am hungry.

CECILY How thoughtless of me. I should have remembered that when one is going to lead an entirely new life, one requires regular and wholesome meals. Won't you come in?

ALGERNON Thank you. Might I have a buttonhole[6] first? I never have any appetite unless I have a buttonhole first.

CECILY A Maréchal Niel?[7] [*Picks up scissors.*]

ALGERNON No, I'd sooner have a pink rose.

CECILY Why? [*Cuts a flower.*]

ALGERNON Because you are like a pink rose, cousin Cecily.

CECILY I don't think it can be right for you to talk to me like that. Miss Prism never says such things to me.

ALGERNON Then Miss Prism is a shortsighted old lady. [CECILY *puts the rose in his buttonhole.*] You are the prettiest girl I ever saw.

CECILY Miss Prism says that all good looks are a snare.

ALGERNON They are a snare that every sensible man would like to be caught in.

CECILY Oh! I don't think I would care to catch a sensible man. I shouldn't know what to talk to him about.

[*They pass into the house.* MISS PRISM *and* DR. CHASUBLE *return.*]

MISS PRISM You are too much alone, dear Dr. Chasuble. You should get married. A misanthrope I can understand—a womanthrope, never!

CHASUBLE [*With a scholar's shudder.*][8] Believe me, I do not deserve so neologistic a phrase. The precept as well as the practice of the Primitive Church[9] was distinctly against matrimony.

MISS PRISM [*Sententiously.*] That is obviously the reason why the Primitive Church has not lasted up to the present day. And you do not seem to realize, dear Doctor, that by persistently remaining single, a man converts himself into a permanent public temptation. Men should be more careful; this very celibacy leads weaker vessels astray.

CHASUBLE But is a man not equally attractive when married?

MISS PRISM No married man is ever attractive except to his wife.

CHASUBLE And often, I've been told, not even to her.

MISS PRISM That depends on the intellectual sympathies of the woman. Maturity can always be depended on. Ripeness can be trusted. Young women are green. [DR. CHASUBLE *starts.*] I spoke horticulturally. My metaphor was drawn from fruits. But where is Cecily?

CHASUBLE Perhaps she followed us to the schools.

[*Enter* JACK *slowly from the back of the garden. He is dressed in the deepest mourning, with crape hat-band and black gloves.*]

MISS PRISM Mr. Worthing!

CHASUBLE Mr. Worthing?

MISS PRISM This is indeed a surprise. We did not look for you till Monday afternoon.

JACK [*Shakes* MISS PRISM *'s hand in a tragic manner.*] I have returned sooner than I expected. Dr. Chasuble, I hope you are well?

CHASUBLE Dear Mr. Worthing, I trust this garb of woe does not betoken some terrible calamity?

JACK My brother.

MISS PRISM More shameful debts and extravagance?

CHASUBLE Still leading his life of pleasure?

JACK [*Shaking his head.*] Dead!

CHASUBLE Your brother Ernest dead?

JACK Quite dead.

MISS PRISM What a lesson for him! I trust he will profit by it.

CHASUBLE Mr. Worthing, I offer you my sincere condolence. You have at least the consolation of knowing that you were always the most generous and forgiving of brothers.

JACK Poor Ernest! He had many faults, but it is a sad, sad blow.

CHASUBLE Very sad indeed. Were you with him at the end?

JACK No. He died abroad; in Paris, in fact. I had a telegram last night from the manager of the Grand Hotel.

CHASUBLE Was the cause of death mentioned?

JACK A severe chill, it seems.

MISS PRISM As a man sows, so shall he reap.

CHASUBLE [*Raising his hand.*] Charity, dear Miss Prism, charity! None of us are perfect. I myself am peculiarly susceptible to drafts. Will

the interment take place here?

JACK No. He seemed to have expressed a desire to be buried in Paris.

CHASUBLE In Paris! [*Shakes his head.*] I fear that hardly points to any very serious state of mind at the last. You would no doubt wish me to make some slight allusion to this tragic domestic affliction next Sunday. [JACK *presses his hand convulsively.*] My sermon on the meaning of the manna in the wilderness can be adapted to almost any occasion, joyful, or, as in the present case, distressing. [*All sigh.*] I have preached it at harvest celebrations, christenings, confirmations, on days of humiliation and festal days. The last time I delivered it was in the Cathedral, as a charity sermon on behalf of the Society for the Prevention of Discontent among the Upper Orders. The Bishop, who was present, was much struck by some of the analogies I drew.

JACK Ah! That reminds me, you mentioned christenings, I think, Dr. Chasuble? I suppose you know how to christen all right? [DR. CHASUBLE *looks astounded.*] I mean, of course, you are continually christening, aren't you?

MISS PRISM It is, I regret to say, one of the Rector's most constant duties in this parish. I have often spoken to the poorer classes on the subject. But they don't seem to know what thrift is.

CHASUBLE But is there any particular infant in whom you are interested, Mr. Worthing? Your brother was, I believe, unmarried, was he not?

JACK Oh yes.

MISS PRISM [*Bitterly.*] People who live entirely for pleasure usually are.

JACK But it is not for any child, dear Doctor. I am very fond of children. No! the fact is, I would like to be christened myself, this afternoon, if you have nothing better to do.

CHASUBLE But surely, Mr. Worthing, you have been christened already?

JACK I don't remember anything about it.

CHASUBLE But have you any grave doubts on the subject?

JACK I certainly intend to have. Of course I don't know if the thing would bother you in any way, or if you think I am a little too old now.

CHASUBLE Not at all. The sprinkling, and, indeed, the immersion of adults is a perfectly canonical practice.

JACK Immersion!

CHASUBLE You need have no apprehensions. Sprinkling is all that is necessary, or indeed I think advisable. Our weather is so changeable. At what hour would you wish the ceremony performed?

JACK Oh, I might trot round about five if that would suit you.

CHASUBLE Perfectly, perfectly! In fact I have two similar ceremonies to perform at that time. A case of twins that occurred recently in one of the outlying cottages on your own estate. Poor Jenkins the carter, a most hardworking man.

JACK Oh! I don't see much fun in being christened along with other babies. It would be childish. Would half-past five do?

CHASUBLE Admirably! Admirably! [*Takes out watch.*] And now, dear Mr. Worthing, I will not intrude any longer into a house of sorrow. I would merely beg you not to be too much bowed down by grief. What seem to us bitter trials are often blessings in disguise.

MISS PRISM This seems to me a blessing of an extremely obvious kind.

[*Enter* CECILY *from the house.*]

CECILY Uncle Jack! Oh, I am pleased to see you back. But what horrid clothes you have got on! Do go and change them.

MISS PRISM Cecily!

CHASUBLE My child! my child! [CECILY *goes towards* JACK; *he kisses her brow in a melancholy manner.*]

CECILY What is the matter, Uncle Jack? Do look happy! You look as if you had toothache, and I have got such a surprise for you. Who do you think is in the dining room? Your brother!

JACK Who?

CECILY Your brother Ernest. He arrived about half an hour ago.

JACK What nonsense! I haven't got a brother!

CECILY Oh, don't say that. However badly he may have behaved to you in the past he is still your brother. You couldn't be so heartless as to disown him. I'll tell him to come out. And you will shake hands with him, won't you, Uncle Jack? [*Runs back into the house.*]

CHASUBLE These are very joyful tidings.

MISS PRISM After we had all been resigned to his loss, his sudden return seems to me peculiarly distressing.

JACK My brother is in the dining room? I don't know what it all means. I think it is perfectly absurd.

[*Enter* ALGERNON *and* CECILY *hand in hand. They come slowly up to* JACK.]

JACK Good heavens! [*Motions* ALGERNON *away.*]

ALGERNON Brother John, I have come down from town to tell you that I am very sorry for all the trouble I have given you, and that I intend to lead a better life in the future. [JACK *glares at him and does not take his hand.*]

CECILY Uncle Jack, you are not going to refuse your own brother's hand?

JACK Nothing will induce me to take his hand. I think his coming down here disgraceful. He knows perfectly well why.

CECILY Uncle Jack, do be nice. There is some good in everyone. Ernest has just been telling me about his poor invalid friend Mr. Bunbury whom he goes to visit so often. And surely there must be much good in one who is kind to an invalid, and leaves the pleasures of London to sit by a bed of pain.

JACK Oh! he has been talking about Bunbury, has he?

CECILY Yes, he has told me all about poor Mr. Bunbury, and his terrible state of health.

JACK Bunbury! Well, I won't have him talk to you about Bunbury or about anything else. It is enough to drive one perfectly frantic.

ALGERNON Of course I admit that the faults were all on my side. But I must say that I think that Brother John's coldness to me is peculiarly painful. I expected a more enthusiastic welcome, especially considering it is the first time I have come here.

CECILY Uncle Jack, if you don't shake hands with Ernest, I will never forgive you.

JACK Never forgive me?

CECILY Never, never, never!

JACK Well, this is the last time I shall ever do it. [*Shakes hands with* ALGERNON *and glares.*]

CHASUBLE It's pleasant, is it not, to see so perfect a reconciliation? I think we might leave the two brothers together.

MISS PRISM Cecily, you will come with us.

CECILY Certainly, Miss Prism. My little task of reconciliation is over.

CHASUBLE You have done a beautiful action today, dear child.

MISS PRISM We must not be premature in our judgments.

CECILY I feel very happy. [*They all go off.*]

JACK You young scoundrel, Algy, you must get out of this place as soon as possible. I don't allow any Bunburying here.

[*Enter* MERRIMAN.]

MERRIMAN I have put Mr. Ernest's things in the room next to yours, sir. I suppose that is all right?

JACK What?

MERRIMAN Mr. Ernest's luggage, sir. I have unpacked it and put it in the room next to your own.

JACK His luggage?

MERRIMAN Yes, sir. Three portmanteaus, a dressing case, two hat-boxes, and a large luncheon basket.[1]

ALGERNON I am afraid I can't stay more than a week this time.

JACK Merriman, order the dogcart[2] at once. Mr. Ernest has been suddenly called back to town.

MERRIMAN Yes, sir. [*Goes back into the house.*]

ALGERNON What a fearful liar you are, Jack. I have not been called back to town at all.

JACK Yes, you have.

ALGERNON I haven't heard anyone call me.

JACK Your duty as a gentleman calls you back.

ALGERNON My duty as a gentleman has never interfered with my pleasures in the smallest degree.

JACK I can quite understand that.

ALGERNON Well, Cecily is a darling.

JACK You are not to talk of Miss Cardew like that. I don't like it.

ALGERNON Well, I don't like your clothes. You look perfectly ridiculous in them. Why on earth don't you go up and change? It is perfectly childish to be in deep mourning for a man who is actually staying for a whole week with you in your house as a guest. I call it grotesque.

JACK You are certainly not staying with me for a whole week as a guest or anything else. You have got to leave . . . by the four-five train.

ALGERNON I certainly won't leave you so long as you are in mourning. It would be most unfriendly. If I were in mourning you would stay with me, I suppose. I should think it very unkind if you didn't.

JACK Well, will you go if I change my clothes?

ALGERNON Yes, if you are not too long. I never saw anybody take so long to dress, and with such little result.

JACK Well, at any rate, that is better than being always overdressed as you are.

ALGERNON If I am occasionally a little overdressed, I make up for it by being always immensely overeducated.

JACK Your vanity is ridiculous, your conduct an outrage, and your presence in my garden utterly absurd. However, you have got to catch the four-five, and I hope you will have a pleasant journey back to town. This Bunburying, as you call it, has not been a great success for you. [*Goes into the house.*]

ALGERNON I think it has been a great success. I'm in love with Cecily, and that is everything.

[*Enter* CECILY *at the back of the garden. She picks up the can and begins to water the flowers.*]

But I must see her before I go, and make arrangements for another Bunbury. Ah, there she is.

CECILY Oh, I merely came back to water the roses. I thought you were with Uncle Jack.

ALGERNON He's gone to order the dogcart for me.

CECILY Oh, is he going to take you for a nice drive?

ALGERNON He's going to send me away.

CECILY Then have we got to part?

ALGERNON I am afraid so. It's very painful parting.

CECILY It is always painful to part from people whom one has known for a very brief space of time. The absence of old friends one can endure with equanimity. But even a momentary separation from anyone to whom one has just been introduced is almost unbearable.

ALGERNON Thank you.

[*Enter* MERRIMAN.]

MERRIMAN The dogcart is at the door, sir. [ALGERNON *looks appealingly at* CECILY.]

CECILY It can wait, Merriman . . . for . . . five minutes.

MERRIMAN Yes, Miss. [*Exit* MERRIMAN.]

ALGERNON I hope, Cecily, I shall not offend you if I state quite frankly and openly that you seem to me to be in every way the visible personification of absolute perfection.

CECILY I think your frankness does you great credit, Ernest. If you will allow me I will copy your remarks into my diary. [*Goes over to table and begins writing in diary.*]

ALGERNON Do you really keep a diary? I'd give anything to look at it. May I?

CECILY Oh no. [*Puts her hand over it.*] You see, it is simply a very young girl's record of her own thoughts and impressions, and consequently meant for publication. When it appears in volume form I hope you will order a copy. But pray, Ernest, don't stop. I delight in taking down from dictation. I have reached "absolute perfection." You can go on. I am quite ready for more.

ALGERNON [*Somewhat taken aback.*] Ahem! Ahem!

CECILY Oh, don't cough, Ernest. When one is dictating one should speak fluently and not cough. Besides, I don't know how to spell a cough. [*Writes as* ALGERNON *speaks.*]

ALGERNON [*Speaking very rapidly.*] Cecily, ever since I first looked upon your wonderful and incomparable beauty, I have dared to love you wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly.

CECILY I don't think that you should tell me that you love me wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly. Hopelessly doesn't seem to make much sense, does it?

ALGERNON Cecily!

[*Enter* MERRIMAN.]

MERRIMAN The dogcart is waiting, sir.

ALGERNON Tell it to come round next week, at the same hour.

MERRIMAN [*Looks at* cecily, *who makes no sign.*] Yes, sir.

[MERRIMAN *retires.*]

CECILY Uncle Jack would be very much annoyed if he knew you were staying on till next week, at the same hour.

ALGERNON Oh, I don't care about Jack. I don't care for anybody in the whole world but you. I love you, Cecily. You will marry me, won't you?

CECILY You silly boy! Of course. Why, we have been engaged for the last three months.

ALGERNON For the last three months?

CECILY Yes, it will be exactly three months on Thursday.

ALGERNON But how did we become engaged?

CECILY Well, ever since dear Uncle Jack first confessed to us that he had a younger brother who was very wicked and bad, you of course have formed the chief topic of conversation between myself and Miss Prism. And of course a man who is much talked about is always very attractive. One feels there must be something in him after all. I daresay it was foolish of me, but I fell in love with you, Ernest.

ALGERNON Darling! And when was the engagement actually settled?

CECILY On the 14th of February last. Worn out by your entire ignorance of my existence, I determined to end the matter one way or the other, and after a long struggle with myself I accepted you under this dear old tree here. The next day I bought this little ring in your name, and this is the little bangle with the true lovers' knot I promised you always to wear.

ALGERNON Did I give you this? It's very pretty, isn't it?

CECILY Yes, you've wonderfully good taste, Ernest. It's the excuse I've always given for your leading such a bad life. And this is the box in which I keep all your dear letters. [*Kneels at table, opens box, and produces letters tied up with blue ribbon.*]

ALGERNON My letters! But my own sweet Cecily, I have never written you any letters.

CECILY You need hardly remind me of that, Ernest. I remember only too well that I was forced to write your letters for you. I always wrote three times a week, and sometimes oftener.

ALGERNON Oh, do let me read them, Cecily?

CECILY Oh, I couldn't possibly. They would make you far too conceited. [*Replaces box.*] The three you wrote me after I had broken off the engagement are so beautiful, and so badly spelled, that even now I can hardly read them without crying a little.

ALGERNON But was our engagement ever broken off?

CECILY Of course it was. On the 22nd of last March. You can see the entry if you like. [*Shows diary.*] "Today I broke off my engagement with Ernest. I feel it is better to do so. The weather still continues charming."

ALGERNON But why on earth did you break it off? What had I done? I had done nothing at all. Cecily, I am very much hurt indeed to hear you broke it off. Particularly when the weather was so charming.

CECILY It would hardly have been a really serious engagement if it hadn't been broken off at least once. But I forgave you before the week was out.

ALGERNON [*Crossing to her, and kneeling.*] What a perfect angel you are, Cecily.

CECILY You dear romantic boy. [*He kisses her, she puts her fingers through his hair.*] I hope your hair curls naturally, does it?

ALGERNON Yes, darling, with a little help from others.

CECILY I am so glad.

ALGERNON You'll never break off our engagement again, Cecily?

CECILY I don't think I could break it off now that I have actually met you. Besides, of course, there is the question of your name.

ALGERNON Yes, of course. [*Nervously.*]

CECILY You must not laugh at me, darling, but it had always been a girlish dream of mine to love someone whose name was Ernest. [ALGERNON *rises*, CECILY *also.*] There is something in that name that seems to inspire absolute confidence. I pity any poor married woman whose husband is not called Ernest.

ALGERNON But, my dear child, do you mean to say you could not love me if I had some other name?

CECILY But what name?

ALGERNON Oh, any name you like—Algernon—for instance . . .

CECILY But I don't like the name of Algernon.

ALGERNON Well, my own dear, sweet, loving little darling, I really can't see why you should object to the name of Algernon. It is not at all a bad name. In fact, it is rather an aristocratic name. Half of the chaps who get into the Bankruptcy Court are called Algernon. But seriously, Cecily . . . [*Moving to her.*] . . . if my name was Algy, couldn't you love me?

CECILY [*Rising.*] I might respect you, Ernest, I might admire your character, but I fear that I should not be able to give you my undivided attention.

ALGERNON Ahem! Cecily! [*Picking up hat.*] Your Rector here is, I suppose, thoroughly experienced in the practice of all the rites and ceremonials of the Church?

CECILY Oh, yes. Dr. Chasuble is a most learned man. He has never written a single book, so you can imagine how much he knows.

ALGERNON I must see him at once on a most important christening—I mean on most important business.

CECILY Oh!

ALGERNON I shan't be away more than half an hour.

CECILY Considering that we have been engaged since February the 14th, and that I only met you today for the first time, I think it is rather hard that you should leave me for so long a period as half an hour. Couldn't you make it twenty minutes?

ALGERNON I'll be back in no time. [*Kisses her and rushes down the garden.*]

CECILY What an impetuous boy he is! I like his hair so much. I must enter his proposal in my diary.

[*Enter* MERRIMAN.]

MERRIMAN A Miss Fairfax has just called to see Mr. Worthing. On very important business, Miss Fairfax states.

CECILY Isn't Mr. Worthing in his library?

MERRIMAN Mr. Worthing went over in the direction of the Rectory some time ago.

CECILY Pray ask the lady to come out here; Mr. Worthing is sure to be back soon. And you can bring tea.

MERRIMAN Yes, Miss. [*Goes out.*]

CECILY Miss Fairfax! I suppose one of the many good elderly women who are associated with Uncle Jack in some of his philanthropic work in London. I don't quite like women who are interested in philanthropic work. I think it is so forward of them.

[*Enter* MERRIMAN.]

MERRIMAN Miss Fairfax.

[*Enter* GWENDOLEN.] [*Exit* MERRIMAN.]

CECILY [*Advancing to meet her.*] Pray let me introduce myself to you. My name is Cecily Cardew.

GWENDOLEN Cecily Cardew? [*Moving to her and shaking hands.*] What a very sweet name! Something tells me that we are going to be great friends. I like you already more than I can say. My first impressions of people are never wrong.

CECILY How nice of you to like me so much after we have known each other such a comparatively short time. Pray sit down.

GWENDOLEN [*Still standing up.*] I may call you Cecily, may I not?

CECILY With pleasure!

GWENDOLEN And you will always call me Gwendolen, won't you?

CECILY If you wish.

GWENDOLEN Then that is all quite settled, is it not?

CECILY I hope so. [*A pause. They both sit down together.*]

GWENDOLEN Perhaps this might be a favourable opportunity for my mentioning who I am. My father is Lord Bracknell. You have never heard of papa, I suppose?

CECILY I don't think so.

GWENDOLEN Outside the family circle, papa, I am glad to say, is entirely unknown. I think that is quite as it should be. The home seems to me to be the proper sphere for the man. And certainly once a man begins to neglect his domestic duties he becomes painfully effeminate, does he not? And I don't like that. It makes men so very attractive. Cecily, mamma, whose views on education are remarkably strict, has brought me up to be extremely shortsighted; it is part of her system; so do you mind my looking at you through my glasses?

CECILY Oh! not at all, Gwendolen. I am very fond of being looked at.

GWENDOLEN [*After examining*cecily *carefully through a lorgnette.*] You are here on a short visit, I suppose.

CECILY Oh no! I live here.

GWENDOLEN [*Severely.*] Really? Your mother, no doubt, or some female relative of advanced years, resides here also?

CECILY Oh no! I have no mother, nor, in fact, any relations.

GWENDOLEN Indeed?

CECILY My dear guardian, with the assistance of Miss Prism, has the arduous task of looking after me.

GWENDOLEN Your guardian?

CECILY Yes, I am Mr. Worthing's ward.

GWENDOLEN Oh! It is strange he never mentioned to me that he had a ward. How secretive of him! He grows more interesting hourly. I am not sure, however, that the news inspires me with feelings of unmixed delight. [*Rising and going to her.*] I am very fond of you, Cecily; I have liked you ever since I met you! But I am bound to state that now that I know that you are Mr. Worthing's ward, I cannot help expressing a wish you were—well just a little older than you seem to be—and not quite so very alluring in appearance. In fact, if I may speak candidly——

CECILY Pray do! I think that whenever one has anything unpleasant to say, one should always be quite candid.

GWENDOLEN Well, to speak with perfect candour, Cecily, I wish that you were fully forty-two, and more than usually plain for your age. Ernest has a strong upright nature. He is the very soul of truth and honour. Disloyalty would be as impossible to him as

deception. But even men of the noblest possible moral character are extremely susceptible to the influence of the physical charms of others. Modern, no less than Ancient History, supplies us with many most painful examples of what I refer to. If it were not so, indeed, History would be quite unreadable.

CECILY I beg your pardon, Gwendolen, did you say Ernest?

GWENDOLEN Yes.

CECILY Oh, but it is not Mr. Ernest Worthing who is my guardian. It is his brother—his elder brother.

GWENDOLEN [*Sitting down again.*] Ernest never mentioned to me that he had a brother.

CECILY I am sorry to say they have not been on good terms for a long time.

GWENDOLEN Ah! that accounts for it. And now that I think of it I have never heard any man mention his brother. The subject seems distasteful to most men. Cecily, you have lifted a load from my mind. I was growing almost anxious. It would have been terrible if any cloud had come across a friendship like ours, would it not? Of course you are quite, quite sure that it is not Mr. Ernest Worthing who is your guardian?

CECILY Quite sure. [*A pause.*] In fact, I am going to be his.

GWENDOLEN [*Inquiringly.*] I beg your pardon?

CECILY [*Rather shy and confidingly.*] Dearest Gwendolen, there is no reason why I should make a secret of it to you. Our little county newspaper is sure to chronicle the fact next week. Mr. Ernest Worthing and I are engaged to be married.

GWENDOLEN [*Quite politely, rising.*] My darling Cecily, I think there must be some slight error. Mr. Ernest Worthing is engaged to me. The announcement will appear in the *Morning Post*[3] on Saturday at the latest.

CECILY [*Very politely, rising*.] I am afraid you must be under some misconception. Ernest proposed to me exactly ten minutes ago. [*Shows diary.*]

GWENDOLEN [*Examines diary through her lorgnette carefully.*] It is certainly very curious, for he asked me to be his wife yesterday

afternoon at 5:30. If you would care to verify the incident, pray do so. [*Produces diary of her own.*] I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train. I am so sorry, dear Cecily, if it is any disappointment to you, but I am afraid *I* have the prior claim.

CECILY It would distress me more than I can tell you, dear Gwendolen, if it caused you any mental or physical anguish, but I feel bound to point out that since Ernest proposed to you he clearly has changed his mind.

GWENDOLEN [*Meditatively.*] If the poor fellow has been entrapped into any foolish promise I shall consider it my duty to rescue him at once, and with a firm hand.

CECILY [*Thoughtfully and sadly.*] Whatever unfortunate entanglement my dear boy may have got into, I will never reproach him with it after we are married.

GWENDOLEN Do you allude to me, Miss Cardew, as an entanglement? You are presumptuous. On an occasion of this kind it becomes more than a moral duty to speak one's mind. It becomes a pleasure.

CECILY Do you suggest, Miss Fairfax, that I entrapped Ernest into an engagement? How dare you? This is no time for wearing the shallow mask of manners. When I see a spade I call it a spade.

GWENDOLEN [*Satirically.*] I am glad to say that I have never seen a spade. It is obvious that our social spheres have been widely different.

[*Enter* MERRIMAN, *followed by the footman. He carries a salver, tablecloth, and plate stand*. CECILY *is about to retort. The presence of the servants exercises a restraining influence, under which both girls chafe.*]

MERRIMAN Shall I lay tea here as usual, Miss?

CECILY [*Sternly, in a calm voice.*] Yes, as usual.

[MERRIMAN *begins to clear table and lay cloth. A long pause.* CECILY *and* GWENDOLEN *glare at each other.*]

GWENDOLEN Are there many interesting walks in the vicinity, Miss Cardew?

CECILY Oh! yes! a great many. From the top of one of the hills quite close one can see five counties.

GWENDOLEN Five counties! I don't think I should like that. I hate crowds.

CECILY [*Sweetly.*] I suppose that is why you live in town?

[GWENDOLEN *bites her lip, and beats her foot nervously with her parasol.*]

GWENDOLEN [*Looking round.*] Quite a well-kept garden this is, Miss Cardew.

CECILY So glad you like it, Miss Fairfax.

GWENDOLEN I had no idea there were any flowers in the country.

CECILY Oh, flowers are as common here, Miss Fairfax, as people are in London.

GWENDOLEN Personally I cannot understand how anybody manages to exist in the country, if anybody who is anybody does. The country always bores me to death.

CECILY Ah! This is what the newspapers call agricultural depression, is it not? I believe the aristocracy are suffering very much from it just at present.[4] It is almost an epidemic amongst them, I have been told. May I offer you some tea, Miss Fairfax?

GWENDOLEN [*With elaborate politeness.*] Thank you. [*Aside.*] Detestable girl! But I require tea!

CECILY [*Sweetly.*] Sugar?

GWENDOLEN [*Superciliously.*] No, thank you. Sugar is not fashionable any more. [CECILY *looks angrily at her, takes up the tongs and puts four lumps of sugar into the cup.*]

CECILY [*Severely.*] Cake or bread and butter?

GWENDOLEN [*In a bored manner.*] Bread and butter, please. Cake is rarely seen at the best houses nowadays.

CECILY [*Cuts a very large slice of cake, and puts it on the tray.*] Hand that to Miss Fairfax.

[MERRIMAN *does so, and goes out with footman.* GWENDOLEN *drinks the tea and makes a grimace. Puts down cup at once, reaches out her hand to the bread and butter, looks at it, and finds it is cake. Rises in indignation.*]

GWENDOLEN You have filled my tea with lumps of sugar, and though I asked most distinctly for bread and butter, you have given me cake. I am known for the gentleness of my disposition, and the extraordinary sweetness of my nature, but I warn you, Miss Cardew, you may go too far.

CECILY [*Rising.*] To save my poor, innocent, trusting boy from the machinations of any other girl there are no lengths to which I would not go.

GWENDOLEN From the moment I saw you I distrusted you. I felt that you were false and deceitful. I am never deceived in such matters. My first impressions of people are invariably right.

CECILY It seems to me, Miss Fairfax, that I am trespassing on your valuable time. No doubt you have many other calls of a similar character to make in the neighborhood.

[*Enter* JACK.]

GWENDOLEN [*Catching sight of him.*] Ernest! My own Ernest!

JACK Gwendolen! Darling! [*Offers to kiss her.*]

GWENDOLEN [*Drawing hack.*] A moment! May I ask if you are engaged to be married to this young lady? [*Points to* CECILY.]

JACK [*Laughing.*] To dear little Cecily! Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

GWENDOLEN Thank you. You may! [*Offers her cheek.*]

CECILY [*Very sweetly.*] I knew there must be some misunderstanding, Miss Fairfax. The gentleman whose arm is at present round your waist is my dear guardian, Mr. John Worthing.

GWENDOLEN I beg your pardon?

CECILY This is Uncle Jack.

GWENDOLEN [*Receding.*] Jack! Oh!

[*Enter* ALGERNON.]

CECILY Here is Ernest.

ALGERNON [*Goes straight over to*cecily *without noticing anyone else.*] My own love! [*Offers to kiss her.*]

CECILY [*Drawing back.*] A moment, Ernest! May I ask you—are you engaged to be married to this young lady?

ALGERNON [*Looking round.*] To what young lady? Good heavens! Gwendolen!

CECILY Yes! to good heavens, Gwendolen, I mean to Gwendolen.

ALGERNON [*Laughing.*] Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

CECILY Thank you. [*Presenting her cheek to be kissed.*] You may. [ALGERNON *kisses her.*]

GWENDOLEN I felt there was some slight error, Miss Cardew. The gentleman who is now embracing you is my cousin, Mr. Algernon Moncrieff.

CECILY [*Breaking away from* ALGERNON .] Algernon Moncrieff! Oh! [*The two girls move towards each other and put their arms round each other's waists as if for protection.*]

CECILY Are you called Algernon?

ALGERNON I cannot deny it.

CECILY Oh!

GWENDOLEN Is your name really John?

JACK [*Standing rather proudly.*] I could deny it if I liked, I could deny anything if I liked. But my name certainly is John. It has been John for years.

CECILY [*To*gwendolen.] A gross deception has been practiced on both of us.

GWENDOLEN My poor wounded Cecily!

CECILY My sweet wronged Gwendolen!

GWENDOLEN [*Slowly and seriously.*] You will call me sister, will you not? [*They embrace*. JACK *and* ALGERNON *groan and walk up and down.*]

CECILY [*Rather brightly.*] There is just one question I would like to be allowed to ask my guardian.

GWENDOLEN An admirable idea! Mr. Worthing, there is just one question I would like to be permitted to put to you. Where is your brother Ernest? We are both engaged to be married to your brother Ernest, so it is a matter of some importance to us to know where your brother Ernest is at present.

JACK [*Slowly and hesitatingly.*] Gwendolen—Cecily—it is very painful for me to be forced to speak the truth. It is the first time in my life that I have ever been reduced to such a painful position, and I am really quite inexperienced in doing anything of the kind.

However I will tell you quite frankly that I have no brother Ernest. I have no brother at all. I never had a brother in my life, and I certainly have not the smallest intention of ever having one in the future.

CECILY [*Surprised.*] No brother at all?

JACK [*Cheerily.*] None!

GWENDOLEN [*Severely.*] Had you never a brother of any kind?

JACK [*Pleasantly.*] Never. Not even of any kind.

GWENDOLEN I am afraid it is quite clear, Cecily, that neither of us is engaged to be married to anyone.

CECILY It is not a very pleasant position for a young girl suddenly to find herself in. Is it?

GWENDOLEN Let us go into the house. They will hardly venture to come after us there.

CECILY No, men are so cowardly, aren't they?

[*They retire into the house with scornful looks.*]

JACK This ghastly state of things is what you call Bunburying, I suppose?

ALGERNON Yes, and a perfectly wonderful Bunbury it is. The most wonderful Bunbury I have ever had in my life.

JACK Well, you've no right whatsoever to Bunbury here.

ALGERNON That is absurd. One has a right to Bunbury anywhere one chooses. Every serious Bunburyist knows that.

JACK Serious Bunburyist! Good heavens!

ALGERNON Well, one must be serious about something, if one wants to have any amusement in life. I happen to be serious about Bunburying. What on earth you are serious about I haven't got the remotest idea. About everything, I should fancy. You have such an absolutely trivial nature.

JACK Well, the only small satisfaction I have in the whole of this wretched business is that your friend Bunbury is quite exploded. You won't be able to run down to the country quite so often as you used to do, dear Algy. And a very good thing too.

ALGERNON Your brother is a little off-colour, isn't he, dear Jack? You won't be able to disappear to London quite so frequently as your wicked custom was. And not a bad thing either.

JACK As for your conduct towards Miss Cardew, I must say that your taking in a sweet, simple, innocent girl like that is quite inexcusable. To say nothing of the fact that she is my ward.

ALGERNON I can see no possible defence at all for your deceiving a brilliant, clever, thoroughly experienced young lady like Miss Fairfax. To say nothing of the fact that she is my cousin.

JACK I wanted to be engaged to Gwendolen, that is all. I love her.

ALGERNON Well, I simply wanted to be engaged to Cecily. I adore her.

JACK There is certainly no chance of your marrying Miss Cardew.

ALGERNON I don't think there is much likelihood, Jack, of you and Miss Fairfax being united.

JACK Well, that is no business of yours.

ALGERNON If it was my business, I wouldn't talk about it. [*Begins to eat muffins.*] It is very vulgar to talk about one's business. Only people like stockbrokers do that, and then merely at dinner parties.

JACK How can you sit there, calmly eating muffins when we are in this horrible trouble, I can't make out. You seem to me to be perfectly heartless.

ALGERNON Well, I can't eat muffins in an agitated manner. The butter would probably get on my cuffs. One should always eat muffins quite calmly. It is the only way to eat them.

JACK I say it's perfectly heartless your eating muffins at all, under the circumstances.

ALGERNON When I am in trouble, eating is the only thing that consoles me. Indeed, when I am in really great trouble, as anyone who knows me intimately will tell you, I refuse everything except food and drink. At the present moment I am eating muffins because I am unhappy. Besides, I am particularly fond of muffins. [*Rising.*]

JACK [*Rising.*] Well, that is no reason why you should eat them all in that greedy way. [*Takes muffins from* ALGERNON.]

ALGERNON [*Offering tea cake.*] I wish you would have tea cake instead. I don't like tea cake.

JACK Good heavens! I suppose a man may eat his own muffins in his own garden.

ALGERNON But you have just said it was perfectly heartless to eat muffins.

JACK I said it was perfectly heartless of you, under the circumstances. That is a very different thing.

ALGERNON That may be. But the muffins are the same. [*He seizes the muffin dish from* JACK.]

JACK Algy, I wish to goodness you would go.

ALGERNON You can't possibly ask me to go without having some dinner. It's absurd. I never go without my dinner. No one ever does, except vegetarians and people like that. Besides I have just made arrangements with Dr. Chasuble to be christened at a quarter to six under the name of Ernest.

JACK My dear fellow, the sooner you give up that nonsense the better. I made arrangements this morning with Dr. Chasuble to be christened myself at 5:30, and I naturally will take the name of Ernest. Gwendolen would wish it. We can't both be christened Ernest. It's absurd. Besides, I have a perfect right to be christened if I like. There is no evidence at all that I ever have been christened by anybody. I should think it extremely probable I never was, and so does Dr. Chasuble. It is entirely different in your case. You have been christened already.

ALGERNON Yes, but I have not been christened for years.

JACK Yes, but you have been christened. That is the important thing.

ALGERNON Quite so. So I know my constitution can stand it. If you are not quite sure about your ever having been christened, I must say I think it rather dangerous your venturing on it now. It might make you very unwell. You can hardly have forgotten that someone very closely connected with you was very nearly carried off this week in Paris by a severe chill.

JACK Yes, but you said yourself that a severe chill was not hereditary.

ALGERNON It usen't to be, I know—but I daresay it is now. Science is always making wonderful improvements in things.

JACK [*Picking up the muffin dish.*] Oh, that is nonsense; you are always talking nonsense.

ALGERNON Jack, you are at the muffins again! I wish you wouldn't. There are only two left. [*Takes them.*] I told you I was particularly fond of muffins.

JACK But I hate tea cake.

ALGERNON Why on earth then do you allow tea cake to be served up for your guests? What ideas you have of hospitality!

JACK Algernon! I have already told you to go. I don't want you here. Why don't you go!

ALGERNON I haven't quite finished my tea yet! and there is still one muffin left. [*Jack groans, and sinks into a chair.* ALGERNON *still continues eating.*]

ACT-DROP

Endnotes

- Note 6: The name recalls Charles Dickens's *Little Dorrit* (1855–57), in which Mrs. General, a prim and proper teacher of manners for young ladies, trains them to repeat "prunes and prism" aloud because this exercise "gives a pretty form to the lips."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Compare with Galatians 6:7: "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Mudie's Circulating Library, which lent copies of new three-volume novels (usually sentimental tales) to subscribers for a moderate fee. Mudie's power in controlling the book market, especially for novels, was on the wane by 1895.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A chasuble is an ornate garment worn by a priest.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In Roman legend a nymph who gave counsel to the second king of Rome. Her name was therefore also used as an

epithet for a woman who provides guidance.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Evening church services.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, book about economics.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The basic unit of currency in India. British civil servants who worked in India were paid in rupees and would suffer from its fall in value.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The British had originally viewed Australia as a place to which they banished their criminals. By this time, however, it was perceived in some quarters as a place, like Canada, to which families might send harmless but useless members, who would be paid an allowance to remain abroad.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, a flower to wear in the buttonhole of his coat lapel.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A chrome-yellow variety of rose named after Adolphe Niel (1802–1869), one of the generals of Napoleon III.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: He shudders because instead of using the correct word for woman hater, *misogynist*, she has coined her own term, one that is etymologically nonsensical.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The early Christian Church, of the 1st to 4th centuries.Return to reference 9
- Note 1:
  According to *Cassell's Domestic Dictionary* (1877–79), "a convenient little receptacle in which gentlemen who are going out shooting for the day, or artists who wish to sketch, can carry their luncheon with them." "Portmanteaus": large leather suitcases. A "dressing case" (also according to *Cassell's*) was "ordinarily made of rosewood, mahogany or coromandel wood." It was supposed to include "scent bottles, jars for pomade and tooth-powders, hair brushes and combs, shaving, nail and tooth brushes, razors and strop, nail scissors, buttonhook, tweezer, nail file and penknife" [noted by Russell Jackson].
  Return to reference 1

- Note 2: A horse-drawn cart with seats, originally designed to carry hunters and their hunting dogs.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A popular journal featuring society gossip and also announcements of engagements and marriages.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: From the 1870s on, landowners (including aristocrats) had been suffering severe losses because of adverse economic conditions.Return to reference 4

Third Act

SCENE—*Morning room*[5] *at the Manor House.*

[GWENDOLEN *and* CECILY *are at the window, looking out into the garden.*]

GWENDOLEN The fact that they did not follow us at once into the house, as anyone else would have done, seems to me to show that they have some sense of shame left.

CECILY They have been eating muffins. That looks like repentance.

GWENDOLEN [*After a pause.*] They don't seem to notice us at all. Couldn't you cough?

CECILY But I haven't got a cough.

GWENDOLEN They're looking at us. What effrontery!

CECILY They're approaching. That's very forward of them.

GWENDOLEN Let us preserve a dignified silence.

CECILY Certainly. It's the only thing to do now.

[*Enter* JACK *followed by* ALGERNON. *They whistle some dreadful popular air from a British Opera.*[6]]

GWENDOLEN This dignified silence seems to produce an unpleasant effect.

CECILY A most distasteful one.

GWENDOLEN But we will not be the first to speak.

CECILY Certainly not.

GWENDOLEN Mr. Worthing, I have something very particular to ask you. Much depends on your reply.

CECILY Gwendolen, your common sense is invaluable. Mr. Moncrieff, kindly answer me the following question. Why did you pretend to be my guardian's brother?

ALGERNON In order that I might have an opportunity of meeting you.

CECILY [*To* GWENDOLEN.] That certainly seems a satisfactory explanation, does it not?

GWENDOLEN Yes, dear, if you can believe him.

CECILY I don't. But that does not affect the wonderful beauty of his answer.

GWENDOLEN True. In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity is the vital thing. Mr. Worthing, what explanation can you offer to me for pretending to have a brother? Was it in order that you might have an opportunity of coming up to town to see me as often as possible?

JACK Can you doubt it, Miss Fairfax?

GWENDOLEN I have the gravest doubts upon the subject. But I intend to crush them. This is not the moment for German scepticism.[7] [*Moving to* CECILY.] Their explanations appear to be quite satisfactory, especially Mr. Worthing's. That seems to me to have the stamp of truth upon it.

CECILY I am more than content with what Mr. Moncrieff said. His voice alone inspires one with absolute credulity.

GWENDOLEN Then you think we should forgive them?

CECILY Yes. I mean no.

GWENDOLEN True! I had forgotten. There are principles at stake that one cannot surrender. Which of us should tell them? The task is not a pleasant one.

CECILY Could we not both speak at the same time?

GWENDOLEN An excellent idea! I nearly always speak at the same time as other people. Will you take the time from me?

CECILY Certainly. [GWENDOLEN *beats time with uplifted finger.*]

GWENDOLEN AND CECILY [*Speaking together.*] Your Christian names are still an insuperable barrier. That is all!

JACK AND ALGERNON [*Speaking together.*] Our Christian names! Is that all? But we are going to be christened this afternoon.

GWENDOLEN [*To* JACK.] For my sake you are prepared to do this terrible thing?

JACK I am.

CECILY [*To* ALGERNON.] To please me you are ready to face this fearful ordeal?

ALGERNON I am!

GWENDOLEN How absurd to talk of the equality of the sexes! Where questions of self-sacrifice are concerned, men are infinitely beyond us.

JACK We are. [*Clasps hands with* ALGERNON.]

CECILY They have moments of physical courage of which we women know absolutely nothing.

GWENDOLEN [*To* JACK.] Darling!

ALGERNON [*To* CECILY.] Darling. [*They fall into each other's arms.*]

[*Enter* MERRIMAN. *When he enters he coughs loudly, seeing the situation.*]

MERRIMAN Ahem! Ahem! Lady Bracknell!

JACK Good heavens!

[*Enter* LADY BRACKNELL. *The couples separate in alarm. Exit* MERRIMAN.]

LADY BRACKNELL Gwendolen! What does this mean?

GWENDOLEN Merely that I am engaged to be married to Mr. Worthing, mamma.

LADY BRACKNELL Come here. Sit down. Sit down immediately. Hesitation of any kind is a sign of mental decay in the young, of physical weakness in the old. [*Turns to* JACK.] Apprised, sir, of my daughter's sudden flight by her trusty maid, whose confidence I purchased by means of a small coin, I followed her at once by a luggage train.[8] Her unhappy father is, I am glad to say, under the impression that she is attending a more than usually lengthy lecture by the University Extension Scheme on the Influence of a Permanent Income on Thought. I do not propose to undeceive him. Indeed I have never undeceived him on any question. I would consider it wrong. But of course, you will clearly understand that all communication between yourself and my daughter must cease immediately from this moment. On this point, as indeed on all points, I am firm.

JACK I am engaged to be married to Gwendolen, Lady Bracknell!

LADY BRACKNELL You are nothing of the kind, sir. And now, as regards Algernon! . . . Algernon!

ALGERNON Yes, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL May I ask if it is in this house that your invalid friend Mr. Bunbury resides?

ALGERNON [*Stammering.*] Oh! No! Bunbury doesn't live here. Bunbury is somewhere else at present. In fact, Bunbury is dead.

LADY BRACKNELL Dead! When did Mr. Bunbury die? His death must have been extremely sudden.

ALGERNON [*Airily.*] Oh! I killed Bunbury this afternoon. I mean poor Bunbury died this afternoon.

LADY BRACKNELL What did he die of?

ALGERNON Bunbury? Oh, he was quite exploded.

LADY BRACKNELL Exploded! Was he the victim of a revolutionary outrage? I was not aware that Mr. Bunbury was interested in social legislation. If so, he is well punished for his morbidity.

ALGERNON My dear Aunt Augusta, I mean he was found out! The doctors found out that Bunbury could not live, that is what I mean —so Bunbury died.

LADY BRACKNELL He seems to have had great confidence in the opinion of his physicians. I am glad, however, that he made up his mind at the last to some definite course of action, and acted under proper medical advice. And now that we have finally got rid of this Mr. Bunbury, may I ask, Mr. Worthing, who is that young person whose hand my nephew Algernon is now holding in what seems to me a peculiarly unnecessary manner?

JACK That lady is Miss Cecily Cardew, my ward.

[LADY BRACKNELL *bows coldly to* CECILY.]

ALGERNON I am engaged to be married to Cecily, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL I beg your pardon?

CECILY Mr. Moncrieff and I are engaged to be married, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL [*With a shiver, crossing to the sofa and sitting down.*] I do not know whether there is anything peculiarly exciting in the air of this particular part of Hertfordshire, but the number of engagements that go on seems to me considerably above the proper average that statistics have laid down for our guidance. I think some preliminary inquiry on my part would not be out of place. Mr. Worthing, is Miss Cardew at all connected with any of the larger railway stations in London? I merely desire information. Until yesterday I had no idea that there were any families or

persons whose origin was a Terminus.[9] [JACK *looks perfectly furious, but restrains himself.*]

JACK [*In a clear, cold voice.*] Miss Cardew is the granddaughter of the late Mr. Thomas Cardew of 149, Belgrave Square, S.W.; Gervase Park, Dorking, Surrey; and the Sporran, Fifeshire, N.B.[1]

LADY BRACKNELL That sounds not unsatisfactory. Three addresses always inspire confidence, even in tradesmen. But what proof have I of their authenticity?

JACK I have carefully preserved the Court Guides[2] of the period. They are open to your inspection, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL [*Grimly.*] I have known strange errors in that publication.

JACK Miss Cardew's family solicitors are Messrs. Markby, Markby, and Markby.

LADY BRACKNELL Markby, Markby, and Markby? A firm of the very highest position in their profession. Indeed I am told that one of the Mr. Markbys is occasionally to be seen at dinner parties. So far I am satisfied.

JACK [*Very irritably.*] How extremely kind of you, Lady Bracknell! I have also in my possession, you will be pleased to hear, certificates of Miss Cardew's birth, baptism, whooping cough, registration, vaccination, confirmation, and the measles; both the German and the English variety.

LADY BRACKNELL Ah! A life crowded with incident, I see; though perhaps somewhat too exciting for a young girl. I am not myself in favor of premature experiences. [*Rises, looks at her watch.*] Gwendolen! the time approaches for our departure. We have not a moment to lose. As a matter of form, Mr. Worthing, I had better ask you if Miss Cardew has any little fortune?

JACK Oh! about a hundred and thirty thousand pounds in the Funds.[3] That is all. Good-bye, Lady Bracknell. So pleased to have seen you.

LADY BRACKNELL [*Sitting down again.*] A moment, Mr. Worthing. A hundred and thirty thousand pounds! And in the Funds! Miss Cardew seems to me a most attractive young lady, now that I look

at her. Few girls of the present day have any really solid qualities, any of the qualities that last, and improve with time. We live, I regret to say, in an age of surfaces. [*To* CECILY.] Come over here, dear. [CECILY *goes across.*] Pretty child! your dress is sadly simple, and your hair seems almost as Nature might have left it. But we can soon alter all that. A thoroughly experienced French maid produces a really marvellous result in a very brief space of time. I remember recommending one to young Lady Lancing, and after three months her own husband did not know her.

JACK [*Aside.*] And after six months nobody knew her.[4]

LADY BRACKNELL [*Glares at* JACK *for a few moments. Then bends, with a practiced smile, to* CECILY.] Kindly turn round, sweet child. [CECILY *turns completely round.*] No, the side view is what I want. [CECILY *presents her profile.*] Yes, quite as I expected. There are distinct social possibilities in your profile. The two weak points in our age are its want of principle and its want of profile. The chin a little higher, dear. Style largely depends on the way the chin is worn. They are worn very high, just at present. Algernon!

ALGERNON Yes, Aunt Augusta!

LADY BRACKNELL There are distinct social possibilities in Miss Cardew's profile.

ALGERNON Cecily is the sweetest, dearest, prettiest girl in the whole world. And I don't care twopence about social possibilities.

LADY BRACKNELL Never speak disrespectfully of Society, Algernon. Only people who can't get into it do that. [*To* CECILY.] Dear child, of course you know that Algernon has nothing but his debts to depend upon. But I do not approve of mercenary marriages. When I married Lord Bracknell I had no fortune of any kind. But I never dreamed for a moment of allowing that to stand in my way. Well, I suppose I must give my consent.

ALGERNON Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL Cecily, you may kiss me!

CECILY [*Kisses her.*] Thank you, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL You may also address me as Aunt Augusta for the future.

CECILY Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL The marriage, I think, had better take place quite soon.

ALGERNON Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

CECILY Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL To speak frankly, I am not in favour of long engagements. They give people the opportunity of finding out each other's character before marriage, which I think is never advisable.

JACK I beg your pardon for interrupting you, Lady Bracknell, but this engagement is quite out of the question. I am Miss Cardew's guardian, and she cannot marry without my consent until she comes of age. That consent I absolutely decline to give.

LADY BRACKNELL Upon what grounds may I ask? Algernon is an extremely, I may almost say an ostentatiously, eligible young man. He has nothing, but he looks everything. What more can one desire?

JACK It pains me very much to have to speak frankly to you, Lady Bracknell, about your nephew, but the fact is that I do not approve at all of his moral character. I suspect him of being untruthful. [ALGERNON *and* CECILY *look at him in indignant amazement.*]

LADY BRACKNELL Untruthful! My nephew Algernon? Impossible! He is an Oxonian.[5]

JACK I fear there can be no possible doubt about the matter. This afternoon, during my temporary absence in London on an important question of romance, he obtained admission to my house by means of the false pretence of being my brother. Under an assumed name he drank, I've just been informed by my butler, an entire pint bottle of my Perrier-Jouet, Brut, '89;[6] a wine I was specially reserving for myself. Continuing his disgraceful deception, he succeeded in the course of the afternoon in alienating the affections of my only ward. He subsequently stayed to tea, and devoured every single muffin. And what makes his conduct all the more heartless is, that he was perfectly well aware from the first

that I have no brother, that I never had a brother, and that I don't intend to have a brother, not even of any kind. I distinctly told him so myself yesterday afternoon.

LADY BRACKNELL Ahem! Mr. Worthing, after careful consideration I have decided entirely to overlook my nephew's conduct to you.

JACK That is very generous of you, Lady Bracknell. My own decision, however, is unalterable. I decline to give my consent.

LADY BRACKNELL [*To* CECILY.] Come here, sweet child, [CECILY *goes over.*] How old are you, dear?

CECILY Well, I am really only eighteen, but I always admit to twenty when I go to evening parties.

LADY BRACKNELL You are perfectly right in making some slight alteration. Indeed, no woman should ever be quite accurate about her age. It looks so calculating. . . . [*In a meditative manner.*] Eighteen, but admitting to twenty at evening parties. Well, it will not be very long before you are of age and free from the restraints of tutelage. So I don't think your guardian's consent is, after all, a matter of any importance.

JACK Pray excuse me, Lady Bracknell, for interrupting you again, but it is only fair to tell you that according to the terms of her grandfather's will Miss Cardew does not come legally of age till she is thirty-five.

LADY BRACKNELL That does not seem to me to be a grave objection. Thirty-five is a very attractive age. London society is full of women of the very highest birth who have, of their own free choice, remained thirty-five for years. Lady Dumbleton is an instance in point. To my own knowledge she has been thirty-five ever since she arrived at the age of forty, which was many years ago now. I see no reason why our dear Cecily should not be even still more attractive at the age you mention than she is at present. There will be a large accumulation of property.

CECILY Algy, could you wait for me till I was thirty-five?

ALGERNON Of course I could, Cecily. You know I could.

CECILY Yes, I felt it instinctively, but I couldn't wait all that time. I hate waiting even five minutes for anybody. It always makes me rather cross. I am not punctual myself, I know, but I do like

punctuality in others, and waiting, even to be married, is quite out of the question.

ALGERNON Then what is to be done, Cecily?

CECILY I don't know, Mr. Moncrieff.

LADY BRACKNELL My dear Mr. Worthing, as Miss Cardew states positively that she cannot wait till she is thirty-five—a remark which I am bound to say seems to me to show a somewhat impatient nature—I would beg of you to reconsider your decision.

JACK But my dear Lady Bracknell, the matter is entirely in your own hands. The moment you consent to my marriage with Gwendolen, I will most gladly allow your nephew to form an alliance with my ward.

LADY BRACKNELL [*Rising and drawing herself up.*] You must be quite aware that what you propose is out of the question.

JACK Then a passionate celibacy is all that any of us can look forward to.

LADY BRACKNELL This is not the destiny I propose for Gwendolen. Algernon, of course, can choose for himself. [*Pulls out her watch.*] Come, dear; [GWENDOLEN *rises.*] we have already missed five, if not six, trains. To miss any more might expose us to comment on the platform.

[*Enter* DR. CHASUBLE.]

CHASUBLE Everything is quite ready for the christenings.

LADY BRACKNELL The christenings, sir! Is not that somewhat premature!

CHASUBLE [*Looking rather puzzled, and pointing to* JACK *and* ALGERNON.] Both these gentlemen have expressed a desire for immediate baptism.

LADY BRACKNELL At their age? The idea is grotesque and irreligious! Algernon, I forbid you to be baptized. I will not hear of such excesses. Lord Bracknell would be highly displeased if he learned that that was the way in which you wasted your time and money.

CHASUBLE Am I to understand then that there are to be no christenings at all this afternoon?

JACK I don't think that, as things are now, it would be of much practical value to either of us, Dr. Chasuble.

CHASUBLE I am grieved to hear such sentiments from you, Mr. Worthing. They savour of the heretical views of the Anabaptists,[7] views that I have completely refuted in four of my unpublished sermons. However, as your present mood seems to be one peculiarly secular, I will return to the church at once. Indeed, I have just been informed by the pew-opener[8] that for the last hour and a half Miss Prism has been waiting for me in the vestry.

LADY BRACKNELL [*Starting.*] Miss Prism! Did I hear you mention a Miss Prism?

CHASUBLE Yes, Lady Bracknell. I am on my way to join her.

LADY BRACKNELL Pray allow me to detain you for a moment. This matter may prove to be one of vital importance to Lord Bracknell and myself. Is this Miss Prism a female of repellent aspect, remotely connected with education?

CHASUBLE [*Somewhat indignantly.*] She is the most cultivated of ladies, and the very picture of respectability.

LADY BRACKNELL It is obviously the same person. May I ask what position she holds in your household?

CHASUBLE [*Severely.*] I am a celibate, madam.

JACK [*Interposing.*] Miss Prism, Lady Bracknell, has been for the last three years Miss Cardew's esteemed governess and valued companion.

LADY BRACKNELL In spite of what I hear of her, I must see her at once. Let her be sent for.

CHASUBLE [*Looking off.*] She approaches; she is nigh.

[*Enter* MISS PRISM *hurriedly.*]

MISS PRISM I was told you expected me in the vestry, dear Canon. I have been waiting for you there for an hour and three quarters. [*Catches sight of* LADY BRACKNELL *who has fixed her with a stony glare*. MISS PRISM *grows pale and quails. She looks anxiously round as if desirous to escape.*]

LADY BRACKNELL [*In a severe, judicial voice.*] Prism! [MISS PRISM *bows her head in shame.*] Come here, Prism! [MISS PRISM *approaches in a humble manner.*] Prism! Where is that baby? [*General consternation.* THE CANON *starts back in horror.* ALGERNON *and* JACK

pretend to be anxious to shield CECILY *and* GWENDOLEN *from hearing the details of a terrible public scandal.*] Twenty-eight years ago, Prism, you left Lord Bracknell's house, Number 104, Upper Grosvenor Street, in charge of a perambulator that contained a baby, of the male sex. You never returned. A few weeks later, through the elaborate investigations of the Metropolitan police, the perambulator was discovered at midnight, standing by itself in a remote corner of Bayswater.[9] It contained the manuscript of a three-volume novel of more than usually revolting sentimentality. [MISS PRISM *starts in involuntary indignation.*] But the baby was not there! [*Everyone looks at* MISS PRISM.] Prism! Where is that baby? [*A pause.*]

MISS PRISM Lady Bracknell, I admit with shame that I do not know. I only wish I did. The plain facts of the case are these. On the morning of the day you mention, a day that is forever branded on my memory, I prepared as usual to take the baby out in its perambulator. I had also with me a somewhat old, but capacious handbag, in which I had intended to place the manuscript of a work of fiction that I had written during my few unoccupied hours. In a moment of mental abstraction, for which I never can forgive myself, I deposited the manuscript in the bassinette, and placed the baby in the handbag.

JACK [*Who has been listening attentively.*] But where did you deposit the handbag?

MISS PRISM Do not ask me, Mr. Worthing.

JACK Miss Prism, this is a matter of no small importance to me. I insist on knowing where you deposited the handbag that contained that infant.

MISS PRISM I left it in the cloak room of one of the larger railway stations in London.

JACK What railway station?

MISS PRISM [*Quite crushed.*] Victoria. The Brighton line. [*Sinks into a chair.*]

JACK I must retire to my room for a moment. Gwendolen, wait here for me.

GWENDOLEN If you are not too long, I will wait here for you all my life.

[*Exit* JACK *in great excitement.*]

CHASUBLE What do you think this means, Lady Bracknell?

LADY BRACKNELL I dare not even suspect, Dr. Chasuble. I need hardly tell you that in families of high position strange coincidences are not supposed to occur. They are hardly considered the thing.

[*Noises heard overhead as if someone was throwing trunks about. Everyone looks up.*]

CECILY Uncle Jack seems strangely agitated.

CHASUBLE Your guardian has a very emotional nature.

LADY BRACKNELL This noise is extremely unpleasant. It sounds as if he was having an argument. I dislike arguments of any kind. They are always vulgar, and often convincing.

CHASUBLE [*Looking up.*] It has stopped now. [*The noise is redoubled.*]

LADY BRACKNELL I wish he would arrive at some conclusion.

GWENDOLEN This suspense is terrible. I hope it will last.

[*Enter* JACK *with a handbag of black leather in his hand.*]

JACK [*Rushing over to* MISS PRISM.] Is this the handbag, Miss Prism? Examine it carefully before you speak. The happiness of more than one life depends on your answer.

MISS PRISM [*Calmly.*] It seems to be mine. Yes, here is the injury it received through the upsetting of a Gower Street omnibus in younger and happier days. Here is the stain on the lining caused by the explosion of a temperance beverage,[1] an incident that occurred at Leamington. And here, on the lock, are my initials. I had forgotten that in an extravagant mood I had had them placed there. The bag is undoubtedly mine. I am delighted to have it so unexpectedly restored to me. It has been a great inconvenience being without it all these years.

JACK [*In a pathetic voice.*] Miss Prism, more is restored to you than this handbag. I was the baby you placed in it.

MISS PRISM [*Amazed.*] You!

JACK [*Embracing her.*] Yes . . . mother!

MISS PRISM [*Recoiling in indignant astonishment*] Mr. Worthing! I am unmarried!

JACK Unmarried! I do not deny that is a serious blow. But after all, who has the right to cast a stone[2] against one who has suffered? Cannot repentance wipe out an act of folly? Why should there be one law for men, and another for women? Mother, I forgive you. [*Tries to embrace her again.*]

MISS PRISM [*Still more indignant.*] Mr. Worthing, there is some error. [*Pointing to* LADY BRACKNELL.] There is the lady who can tell you who you really are.

JACK [*After a pause.*] Lady Bracknell, I hate to seem inquisitive, but would you kindly inform me who I am?

LADY BRACKNELL I am afraid that the news I have to give you will not altogether please you. You are the son of my poor sister, Mrs. Moncrieff, and consequently Algernon's elder brother.

JACK Algy's elder brother! Then I have a brother after all. I knew I had a brother! I always said I had a brother! Cecily—how could you have ever doubted that I had a brother? [*Seizes hold of* ALGERNON.] Dr. Chasuble, my unfortunate brother. Miss Prism, my unfortunate brother. Gwendolen, my unfortunate brother. Algy, you young scoundrel, you will have to treat me with more respect in the future. You have never behaved to me like a brother in all your life.

ALGERNON Well, not till today, old boy, I admit. I did my best, however, though I was out of practice. [*Shakes hands.*]

GWENDOLEN [*To* JACK.] My own! But what own are you? What is your Christian name, now that you have become someone else?

JACK Good heavens! . . . I had quite forgotten that point. Your decision on the subject of my name is irrevocable, I suppose?

GWENDOLEN I never change, except in my affections.

CECILY What a noble nature you have, Gwendolen!

JACK Then the question had better be cleared up at once. Aunt Augusta, a moment. At the time when Miss Prism left me in the handbag, had I been christened already?

LADY BRACKNELL Every luxury that money could buy, including christening, had been lavished on you by your fond and doting parents.

JACK Then I was christened! That is settled. Now, what name was I given? Let me know the worst.

LADY BRACKNELL Being the eldest son you were naturally christened after your father.

JACK [*Irritably.*] Yes, but what was my father's Christian name?

LADY BRACKNELL [*Meditatively.*] I cannot at the present moment recall what the General's Christian name was. But I have no doubt he had one. He was eccentric, I admit. But only in later years. And that was the result of the Indian climate, and marriage, and indigestion, and other things of that kind.

JACK Algy! Can't you recollect what our father's Christian name was?

ALGERNON My dear boy, we were never even on speaking terms. He died before I was a year old.

JACK His name would appear in the Army Lists of the period, I suppose, Aunt Augusta?

LADY BRACKNELL The General was essentially a man of peace, except in his domestic life. But I have no doubt his name would appear in any military directory.

JACK The Army Lists of the last forty years are here. These delightful records should have been my constant study. [*Rushes to bookcase and tears the books out.*] M. Generals . . . Mallam, Maxbohm,[3] Magley, what ghastly names they have—Markby, Migsby, Mobbs, Moncrieff! Lieutenant 1840, Captain, Lieutenant Colonel, Colonel, General 1869, Christian names, Ernest John. [*Puts book very quietly down and speaks quite calmly.*] I always told you, Gwendolen, my name was Ernest, didn't I? Well it is Ernest after all. I mean it naturally is Ernest.

LADY BRACKNELL Yes, I remember now that the General was called Ernest. I knew I had some particular reason for disliking the name.

GWENDOLEN Ernest! My own Ernest! I felt from the first that you could have no other name!

JACK Gwendolen, it is a terrible thing for a man to find out suddenly that all his life he has been speaking nothing but the truth. Can you forgive me?

GWENDOLEN I can. For I feel that you are sure to change.

JACK My own one!

CHASUBLE [*To* MISS PRISM.] Laetitia! [*Embraces her.*]

MISS PRISM [*Enthusiastically.*] Frederick! At last!

ALGERNON Cecily! [*Embraces her.*] At last!

JACK Gwendolen! [*Embraces her.*] At last!

LADY BRACKNELL My nephew, you seem to be displaying signs of triviality.

JACK On the contrary, Aunt Augusta, I've now realized for the first time in my life the vital Importance of Being Earnest.

CURTAIN

performed 1895 **Endnotes** 1899

- Note 5: A relatively informally furnished room for receiving visitors making morning calls (usually close friends of the host or hostess). Afternoon visitors, on the other hand, would be received in the drawing room, a much more formal and elegant setting.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Probably a reference to one of the operas of W. S. Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Many 19th-century German scholars (such as D. F. Strauss) were notorious among the British for being skeptical in their analyses of religious texts.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Freight train.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Station at the end of a railway line.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Presumably north Britain, that is, Scotland.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Directories commonly used in the era.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Interest-bearing government bonds.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, she became socially unacceptable because of her scandalous behavior.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, he had been a student at Oxford (in medieval Latin, *Oxonia*).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: An outstanding brand and year of dry champagne.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A radical Protestant sect of the 17th century, whose repudiation of infant baptism was regarded as heretical by Anglicans.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A person employed at church services to usher worshippers to their pews and open the doors for them.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A once fashionable locality in the West End near Kensington Gardens.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A nonalcoholic drink. The temperance movement encouraged abstinence from alcohol.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: When the scribes and Pharisees brought to Jesus an adulterous woman with the reminder that the law of Moses required her to be stoned, he answered: “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (John 8:7).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A play on the name of Max Beerbohm (1872–1956), English essayist, caricaturist, and parodist.Return to reference 3

From De Profundis[1]

And the end of it all is that I have got to forgive you. I must do so. I don't write this letter to put bitterness into your heart, but to pluck it out of mine. For my own sake I must forgive you. One cannot always keep an adder in one's breast to feed on one, nor rise up every night to sow thorns in the garden of one's soul. It will not be difficult at all for me to do so, if you help me a little. Whatever you did to me in old days I always readily forgave. It did you no good then. Only one whose life is without stain of any kind can forgive sins. But now when I sit in humiliation and disgrace it is different. My forgiveness should mean a great deal to you now. Some day you will realise it. Whether you do so early or late, soon or not at all, my way is clear before me. I cannot allow you to go through life bearing in your heart the burden of having ruined a man like me. The thought might make you callously indifferent, or morbidly sad. I must take the burden from you and put it on my own shoulders.

I must say to myself that neither you nor your father, multiplied a thousand times over, could possibly have ruined a man like me: that I ruined myself: and that nobody, great or small, can be ruined except by his own hand. I am quite ready to do so. I am trying to do so, though you may not think it at the present moment. If I have brought this pitiless indictment against you, think what an indictment I bring without pity against myself. Terrible as what you did to me was, what I did to myself was far more terrible still.

I was a man who stood in symbolic relations to the art and culture of my age. I had realised this for myself at the very dawn of my manhood, and had forced my age to realise it afterwards. Few men hold such a position in their own lifetime and have it so acknowledged. It is usually discerned, if discerned at all, by the historian, or the critic, long after both the man and his age have passed away. With me it was different. I felt it myself, and made

others feel it. Byron[2] was a symbolic figure, but his relations were to the passion of his age and its weariness of passion. Mine were to something more noble, more permanent, of more vital issue, of larger scope.

The gods had given me almost everything. I had genius, a distinguished name, high social position, brilliancy, intellectual daring: I made art a philosophy, and philosophy an art: I altered the minds of men and the colours of things: there was nothing I said or did that did not make people wonder: I took the drama, the most objective form known to art, and made it as personal a mode of expression as the lyric or the sonnet, at the same time that I widened its range and enriched its characterization: drama, novel, poem in rhyme, poem in prose, subtle or fantastic dialogue, whatever I touched I made beautiful in a new mode of beauty: to truth itself I gave what is false no less than what is true as its rightful province, and showed that the false and the true are merely forms of intellectual existence. I treated Art as the supreme reality, and life as a mere mode of fiction: I awoke the imagination of my century so that it created myth and legend around me: I summed up all systems in a phrase, and all existence in an epigram.

Along with these things, I had things that were different. I let myself be lured into long spells of senseless and sensual ease. I amused myself with being a *flâneur*,[3] a dandy, a man of fashion. I surrounded myself with the smaller natures and the meaner[4] minds. I became the spendthrift of my own genius, and to waste an eternal youth gave me a curious joy. Tired of being on the heights I deliberately went to the depths in the search for new sensations. What the paradox was to me in the sphere of thought, perversity became to me in the sphere of passion. Desire, at the end, was a malady, or a madness, or both. I grew careless of the lives of others. I took pleasure where it pleased me and passed on. I forgot that every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character, and that therefore what one has done in the secret chamber one has some day to cry aloud on the housetops. I ceased to be Lord over myself. I was no longer the Captain of my Soul,[5] and did not know

it. I allowed you to dominate me, and your father to frighten me. I ended in horrible disgrace. There is only one thing for me now, absolute Humility: just as there is only one thing for you, absolute Humility also. You had better come down into the dust and learn it beside me.

I have lain in prison for nearly two years. Out of my nature has come wild despair; an abandonment to grief that was piteous even to look at: terrible and impotent rage: bitterness and scorn: anguish that wept aloud: misery that could find no voice: sorrow that was dumb. I have passed through every possible mood of suffering. Better than Wordsworth himself I know what Wordsworth meant when he said:

> Suffering is permanent, obscure, and dark
> And has the nature of Infinity.[6]

But while there were times when I rejoiced in the idea that my sufferings were to be endless, I could not bear them to be without meaning. Now I find hidden away in my nature something that tells me that nothing in the whole world is meaningless, and suffering least of all. That something hidden away in my nature, like a treasure in a field, is Humility.

It is the last thing left in me, and the best: the ultimate discovery at which I have arrived: the starting-point for a fresh development. It has come to me right out of myself, so I know that it has come at the proper time. It could not have come before, nor later. Had anyone told me of it, I would have rejected it. Had it been brought to me, I would have refused it. As I found it, I want to keep it. I must do so. It is the one thing that has in it the elements of life, of a new life, a *Vita Nuova*[7] for me.

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Morality does not help me. I am a born antinomian.[8] I am one of those who are made for exceptions, not for laws. But while I see

that there is nothing wrong in what one does, I see that there is something wrong in what one becomes. It is well to have learned that.

Religion does not help me. The faith that others give to what is unseen, I give to what one can touch, and look at. My Gods dwell in temples made with hands, and within the circle of actual experience is my creed made perfect and complete: too complete it may be, for like many or all of those who have placed their Heaven in this earth, I have found in it not merely the beauty of Heaven, but the horror of Hell also. When I think about Religion at all, I feel as if I would like to found an order for those who cannot believe: the Confraternity of the Fatherless one might call it, where on an altar, on which no taper burned, a priest, in whose heart peace had no dwelling, might celebrate with unblessed bread and a chalice empty of wine. Everything to be true must become a religion. And agnosticism should have its ritual no less than faith. It has sown its martyrs, it should reap its saints, and praise God daily for having hidden Himself from man. But whether it be faith or agnosticism, it must be nothing external to me. Its symbols must be of my own creating. Only that is spiritual which makes its own form. If I may not find its secret within myself, I shall never find it. If I have not got it already, it will never come to me.

Reason does not help me. It tells me that the laws under which I am convicted are wrong and unjust laws, and the system under which I have suffered a wrong and unjust system. But, somehow, I have got to make both of these things just and right to me. And exactly as in Art one is only concerned with what a particular thing is at a particular moment to oneself, so it is also in the ethical evolution of one's character. I have got to make everything that has happened to me good for me. The plank-bed, the loathsome food, the hard ropes shredded into oakum till one's fingertips grow dull with pain, the menial offices[9] with which each day begins and finishes, the harsh orders that routine seems to necessitate, the dreadful dress that makes sorrow grotesque to look at, the silence, the solitude, the shame—each and all of these things I have to transform into a

spiritual experience. There is not a single degradation of the body which I must not try and make into a spiritualizing of the soul.

I want to get to the point when I shall be able to say, quite simply and without affectation, that the two great turning-points of my life were when my father sent me to Oxford, and when society sent me to prison. I will not say that it is the best thing that could have happened to me, for that phrase would savour of too great bitterness towards myself. I would sooner say, or hear it said of me, that I was so typical a child of my age that in my perversity,[1] and for that perversity's sake, I turned the good things of my life to evil, and the evil things of my life to good. What is said, however, by myself or by others matters little. The important thing, the thing that lies before me, the thing that I have to do, or be for the brief remainder of my days one maimed, marred, and incomplete, is to absorb into my nature all that has been done to me, to make it part of me, to accept it without complaint, fear, or reluctance. The supreme vice is shallowness. Whatever is realized is right.

1897 1962

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Out of the depths (Latin); Psalms 130:1: "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord." While in prison in Reading Gaol, Wilde was allowed a pen and paper only to write letters. Given one sheet of paper at a time, which was taken away after it was filled, Wilde wrote this work as a letter to Lord Alfred Douglas, whose nickname was Bosie. Wilde titled it *Epistola: In Carcere et Vinculis (Letter: In Prison and in Chains).* He was given the manuscript on his release and turned it over to a friend, Robert Ross, who gave it its current title and published it in an abridged version in 1905, after Wilde's death. After Douglas's death in 1945, a fuller text was published by Wilde's son, Vyvyan Holland; but only in 1962, when scholars could consult the original manuscript, did a complete version appear.
  Return to reference 1

- Note 2: George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788–1824), Romantic poet.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Idle stroller (French).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: More shallow or more trivial.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: See W. E. Henley's "Invictus" (1888), line 16.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: From *The Borderers* (written 1796–97), lines 1543–44.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: New life (Italian); here Dante's earliest work (1292–94) about his love for Beatrice.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Rejecter of moral law.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Duties. "Oakum": loose fiber from old hemp ropes, which prisoners were often made to shred.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, obstinate desire to behave unconventionally.Return to reference 1

OLIVE SCHREINER
1855–1920

Novelist, feminist, pacifist, South African, "New Woman": it is difficult to know which of these terms should come first in describing Olive Schreiner. The daughter of a German missionary and his British wife, Schreiner was born in the British Cape Colony in what is now South Africa. She received no formal education but was an avid reader and began writing as a teenager. Schreiner came to England in 1881 in the hope of studying medicine and becoming a doctor. Instead, she published her best-known work, *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), and was quickly hailed as one of the foremost voices of the "New Woman" movement. This movement sought expanded educational and professional opportunities for women and condemned the sexual double standard that punished women harshly for transgressions largely accepted when committed by men. While in London, Schreiner developed close relationships with intellectuals and reformers such as Havelock Ellis, Edward Carpenter, Karl Pearson, and Eleanor Marx, and became an active member of the Men and Women's Club, dedicated to the open discussion of gender and sex.

During her time in England, Schreiner wrote a series of allegories collected as *Dreams* (1890) and *Dream Life and Real Life* (1893). In 1889 she returned to South Africa where she focused on her country's political problems. She wrote a series of articles that were later collected as *Thoughts on South Africa* (1923), one portion of

which is reproduced here. Schreiner's opposition to the expansionist violence of Cape Colony's prime minister, Cecil Rhodes, was expressed in her satirical novel, *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* (1897). Schreiner became a member of a small interracial band of South African anti-imperialists, one of whom eventually became her husband: Samuel Cronwright.

In *Women and Labour* (1911), Schreiner offers a scathing attack on the outdated notion that marriage and child-rearing are the only acceptable vocations for middle- and upper-class women. Pointing to the changed conditions that made child-bearing both less necessary (because of decreased infant mortality) and more costly (because industrialization requires fewer laborers), Schreiner writes that "We [women] do not ask that the wheels of time should reverse themselves. . . . We demand that, in the strange new world that is arising alike upon the man and the woman . . . we also shall have our share of honoured and socially useful human toil, our full half of the labour of the Children of Woman. We demand nothing more than this, and we will take nothing less. *This is our* 'Woman's Right!' "

With the exception of *Woman and Labour*, South Africa and South African politics provide an important context for most of Schreiner's writings. The Cape Colony officially became a British colony in 1814, and the British government actively encouraged British citizens to emigrate and become farmers. This move partially displaced Dutch farmers (Boers) in the area. It also exacerbated long-standing tensions between the Boers, the Xhosa, and the Zulu. The details of these conflicts are complex, but for the purposes of understanding Schreiner's work, what is most important to know is the cultural and racial diversity of the Cape Colony in the nineteenth century, and the way it was bound up with histories of violence and oppression. Schreiner herself held many racist views, but these opinions did not prevent her from deploring the divisions she saw weakening her country.

From Stray Thoughts on South Africa

It may be said that there are no states in South Africa whose boundaries represent deep-lying racial conditions, but rather mere fiscal and parochial divisions. All the conditions on which unity of national life depends cross and re-cross their boundaries in every direction. Race, language, religion, kinship, all militate against homogeneity. But not yet have we grasped the full complexity and difficulty of our South African question. Not only do the South Africans exist everywhere in superimposed layers of differing races, not only are our political states composed of a mingling of all our peoples, but in our households, our families, and very persons we are blended. * * * The peoples of South Africa resemble the ingredients of a pudding when they are in the process of being stirred together in a basin: plums, eggs, wine, flour, and water. To hope to re-sort them is vain; for good or for evil, the mixture is made; they have so permeated each other's substance that again to re-sort them is impossible, however much we may wish it. We can only go on further.

Looking, then, at South Africa as a whole, the thought forces itself on us: "Are the South Africans fated forever to remain an inchoate, shapeless mass of human particles, politically split up into artificial states, severed from each other by lines of racial scorn and opposition, and devoid of that national existence which is the matrix in which alone the full development of the individual takes place?" We believe that no man can impartially study the social and political condition of the South Africa of to-day without coming to the conclusion that there is one, and only one, form of healthful national organization open to us. Across the face of the whole map of South Africa there is no line which can be drawn which would stand for a healthy, natural line of division; it would be a line dividing homogeneous substances, not uniting them. There is one form, and one only, of crystallization possible to us—we must form one large,

united whole. This is at once simpler and easier than would be the organization of any division alone; and this alone can give us the power of dealing with our subtler internal difficulties. South African unity is not the dream of the visionary and the enthusiast; it is not even like that splendid vision of the first Napoleon[1] of a unified Europe, which failed because dreamed five hundred years before its time; it is a condition the necessity for which is daily and hourly forced upon us by the practical needs of life; it is the one possible course which offers any solution of our social and political difficulties; it is the one course open to us. It is for this unity that all great men born in South Africa will be compelled to labour during the next sixty years; it must precede the production of anything great and beautiful by our people as a whole. Neither art, nor science, nor literature, nor state-craft will flourish among us as long as we remain in our inchoate, divided form.

For the moment the most pressing and absorbing aspect of this union is the combination of our artificial and jarring political states into a harmonious political whole. It is a change many men now living will probably see accomplished; and so ripe is the time for it, and so obvious the necessity for it, that it may be with us before the decade is out. No man can study closely the conditions of the South Africa of to-day and the forces that are at work upon it without the conviction being forced upon him that within the next thirty years at least there will exist in South Africa a great central government, the embodiment of the united political aspirations and desires of the people; that our State divisions will be relegated to the performance of their normal and valuable function of internal sub-government.

But there is another aspect of the question of union more subtle and more vital, though for the moment less obtrusive. A central government, political unity, customs union, a common treasury, are but the shell in which the vital unity must be contained if South Africa is ever to become not simply a large, but a great and progressive nation.

The question which surpasses all others in importance to us, is, "Can we make of our opposed and conflicting races a socially

harmonious and united whole?" If we cannot so organize our conflicting elements, that should a foreign foe land on South African shores, and six men were left to defend them—two of English, two of Dutch, and two of Native extraction—if those six men would not stand shoulder to shoulder fighting for their land—then, however large, rich, populous South Africa may become, we shall never be able to look free, united peoples in the face.

In past ages empires have existed which were founded on racial division, hatred, and contention. Of this type were all the great States of antiquity—Greece, Assyria, Rome, Egypt, and many of the more modern world. They have all passed; but for a time they were all able to maintain themselves against States of like construction with themselves, only falling when they came into contact with freer or more united peoples.

In the twentieth century it will not be possible for a State constructed after the model of the ancient world to attain to greatness even for a time. In an age in which the nations of the civilised world are, with Titanic efforts, shaping rafts with which to shoot those rapids[2] down which race after race, and civilisation after civilisation have disappeared; and will shoot them and appear below them free and united peoples; if the South Africa of the future is to remain eaten internally by race hatreds, a film of culture and intelligence spread over seething masses of ignorance and brutality, inter-support and union being wholly lacking; then, though it may be our misfortune rather than our crime, we shall have to take the back place among the nations. In art, in science, in material inventions, in the discovery of larger and more satisfactory modes of conducting human life, they will surpass us.

The problem of South Africa, "How shall these two modes of union be attained?" is a problem so complex, so vast, so beset with difficulties, that it may be said that no European nation has during the last eight hundred years had to face anything approaching it in complexity and difficulty. To find any analogy to it, we must go back as far as the England of Alfred, when divided Saxons and invading Danes[3] were the elements out of which organic unity had to be

constructed. But there is an element in our problem which no European nation has ever had to face, and which no migratory part of a European race has ever had to deal with in exactly the form in which it meets us. Our race question is complicated by a question of colour, which has to be faced in an age which does not allow of the old methods in dealing with alien and inferior peoples. In South Africa the nineteenth century is brought face to face with a pre-historic world.

To understand the difficulty of our problem, to grasp the nature of the obstructions which lie in our path to union, our crying need for it, and the ground we have for hope, it will be well to examine more closely, as I propose to do in my next article, the different races of which we are composed, and finally to glance briefly at some of the conditions and individuals that are at the present moment influencing the future of South Africa.

A Returned South African.

1891

Endnotes

- Note 1: Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821), French military and political leader, emperor of the French Empire from 1804 to 1814 and again in 1815.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, to navigate in rapidly moving water.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Alfred the Great, king of the West Saxons (871–86), who made an agreement to divide rule of England between Saxons and Vikings.Return to reference 3

The Woman’s Rose

I have an old, brown, carved box; the lid is broken and tied with a string. In it I keep little squares of paper, with hair inside, and a little picture which hung over my brother’s bed when we were children, and other things as small. I HAVE IN IT a rose. Other women also have such boxes where they keep such trifles, but no one has my rose.

When my eye is dim, and my heart grows faint, and my faith in woman flickers, and her present is an agony to me, and her future a despair, the scent of that dead rose, withered for twelve years, comes back to me. I know there will be spring; as surely as the birds know it when they see above the snow two tiny, quivering green leaves. Spring cannot fail us.

There were other flowers in the box once; a bunch of white acacia flowers, gathered by the strong hand of a man, as we passed down a village street on a sultry afternoon, when it had rained, and the drops fell on us from the leaves of the acacia-trees. The flowers were d they made mildew marks on the paper I folded them in. After many years I threw them away. There is nothing of them left in the box now, but a faint, strong smell of dried acacia, that recalls that sultry summer afternoon; but the rose is in the box still.

It is many years ago now; I was a girl of fifteen, and I went to visit in a small up-country town. It was young in those days, and two days’ journey from the nearest village; the population consisted mainly of men. A few were married, and had their wives and children, but most were single. There was only one young girl there when I came. She was about seventeen, fair, and rather fully-fleshed; she had large dreamy blue eyes, and wavy light hair; full, rather heavy lips, until she smiled; then her face broke into dimples, and all her white teeth shone. The hotel-keeper may have had a daughter, and the farmer in the outskirts had two, but we never saw them. She reigned alone. All the men worshipped her. She was the

only woman they had to think of. They talked of her on the "stoep,"[1] at the market, at the hotel; they watched for her at street corners; they hated the man she bowed to or walked with down the street. They brought flowers to the front door; they offered her their horses; they begged her to marry them when they dared. Partly, there was something noble and heroic in this devotion of men to the best woman they knew; partly there was something natural in it, that these men, shut off from the world, should pour at the feet of one woman the worship that otherwise would have been given to twenty; and partly there was something mean in their envy of one another. If she had raised her little finger, I suppose, she might have married any one out of twenty of them.

Then I came. I do not think I was prettier; I do not think I was so pretty as she was. I was certainly not as handsome. But I was vital, and I was new, and she was old—they all forsook her and followed me. They worshipped me. It was to my door that the flowers came; it was I had twenty horses offered me when I could only ride one; it was for me they waited at street corners; it was what I said and did that they talked of. Partly I liked it. I had lived alone all my life; no one ever had told me I was beautiful and a woman. I believed them. I did not know it was simply a fashion, which one man had set and the rest followed unreasoningly. I liked them to ask me to marry them, and to say, No. I despised them. The mother heart had not swelled in me yet; I did not know all men were my children, as the large woman knows when her heart is grown. I was too small to be tender. I liked my power. I was like a child with a new whip, which it goes about cracking everywhere, not caring against what. I could not wind it up and put it away. Men were curious creatures, who liked me, I could never tell why. Only one thing took from my pleasure; I could not bear that they had deserted her for me. I liked her dreamy blue eyes, I liked her slow walk and drawl; when I saw her sitting among men, she seemed to me much too good to be among them; I would have given all their compliments if she would once have smiled at me as she smiled at them, with all her face breaking into radiance, with her dimples and

flashing teeth. But I knew it never could be; I felt sure she hated me; that she wished I was dead; that she wished I had never come to the village. She did not know, when we went out riding, and a man who had always ridden beside her came to ride beside me, that I sent him away; that once when a man thought to win my favour by ridiculing her slow drawl before me, I turned on him so fiercely that he never dared come before me again. I knew she knew that at the hotel men had made a bet as to which was the prettier, she or I, and had asked each man who came in, and that the one who had staked on me won. I hated them for it, but I would not let her see that I cared about what she felt towards me.

She and I never spoke to each other.

If we met in the village street we bowed and passed on; when we shook hands we did so silently, and did not look at each other. But I thought she felt my presence in a room just as I felt hers.

At last the time for my going came. I was to leave the next day. Some one I knew gave a party in my honour, to which all the village was invited.

It was midwinter; there was nothing in the gardens but a few dahlias and chrysanthemums, and I suppose that for two hundred miles round there was not a rose to be bought for love or money. Only in the garden of a friend of mine, in a sunny corner between the oven and the brick wall, there was a rose-tree growing which had on it one bud. It was white, and it had been promised to the fair-haired girl to wear at the party.

The evening came; when I arrived and went to the waiting-room, to take off my mantle, I found the girl there already. She was dressed in pure white, with her great white arms and shoulders showing, and her bright hair glittering in the candle-light, and the white rose fastened at her breast. She looked like a queen. I said "Good evening," and turned away quickly to the glass to arrange my old black scarf across my old black dress.

Then I felt a hand touch my hair.

"Stand still," she said.

I looked in the glass. She had taken the white rose from her breast, and was fastening it in my hair.

"How nice dark hair is! it sets off flowers so." She stepped back and looked at me. "It looks much better there!"

I turned round.

"You are so beautiful to me," I said.

"Y-e-s," she said, with her slow colonial drawl; "I'm so glad."

We stood looking at each other.

Then they came in and swept us away to dance. All the evening we did not come near each other. Only once, as she passed, she smiled at me.

The next morning I left the town.

I never saw her again.

Years afterwards I heard she had married and gone to America; it may or may not be so—but the rose—the rose is in the box still! When my faith in woman grows dim, and it seems that for want of love and magnanimity she can play no part in any future heaven; then the scent of that small withered thing comes back:—spring cannot fail us.

1893

Endnotes

- Note 1: Boer word for *porch*.Return to reference 1

From Woman and Labor

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In a million new directions forms of honored and remunerative social labor are opening up before the feet of the modern man, which his ancestors never dreamed of; and day by day they yet increase in numbers and importance. The steamship, the hydraulic lift, the patent road-maker, the railway-train, the electric tram-car, the steam-driven mill, the Maxim gun and the torpedo boat,[1] once made, may perform their labors with the guidance and assistance of comparatively few hands; but a whole army of men of science, engineers, clerks, and highly-trained workmen is necessary for their invention, construction, and maintenance. In the domains of art, of science, of literature, and above all in the field of politics and government, an almost infinite extension has taken place in the fields of male labor. * * *

So much is this the case, that, exactly as in the earlier conditions of society an excessive and almost crushing amount of the most important social labor generally devolved upon the female, so under modern civilized conditions among the wealthier and fully civilized classes, an unduly excessive share of labor tends to devolve upon the male. That almost entirely modern, morbid condition, affecting brain and nervous system, and shortening the lives of thousands in modern civilized societies, which is vulgarly known as "overwork" or "nervous breakdown," is but one evidence of the even excessive share of mental labor devolving upon the modern male of the cultured classes, who, in addition to maintaining himself, has frequently dependent upon him a larger or smaller number of entirely parasitic females. But, whatever the result of the changes of modern civilization may be with regard to the male, he certainly cannot complain that they have as a whole robbed him of his fields

of labor, diminished his share in the conduct of life, or reduced him to a condition of morbid inactivity.

In our woman's field of labor, matters have tended to shape themselves wholly otherwise! The changes which have taken place during the last centuries, and which we sum up under the compendious term "modern civilization," have tended to rob woman, not merely in part but almost wholly, of the more valuable part of her ancient domain of productive and social labor; and, where there has not been a determined and conscious resistance on her part, have nowhere spontaneously tended to open out to her new and compensatory fields.

It is this fact which constitutes our modern "Woman's Labor Problem."

Our spinning-wheels are all broken; in a thousand huge buildings steam-driven looms, guided by a few hundred thousands of hands (often those of men), produce the clothings of half the world; and we dare no longer say, proudly, as of old, that we and we alone clothe our peoples.

Our hoes and our grindstones passed from us long ago, when the plowman and the miller took our place but for a time we kept fast possession of the kneading-trough and the brewing-vat. To-day, steam often shapes our bread, and the loaves are set down at our very door—it may be by a man-driven motor-car! The history of our household drinks we know no longer; we merely see them set before us at our tables. Day by day machine-prepared and factory-produced viands take a larger and larger place in the dietary of rich and poor, till the working man's wife places before her household little that is of her own preparation; while among the wealthier classes, so far has domestic change gone that men are not infrequently found laboring in our houses and kitchens, and even standing behind our chairs ready to do all but actually place the morsels of food between our feminine lips. The army of rosy milkmaids has passed away for ever, to give place to the cream-separator and the, largely, male-and-machinery-manipulated butter pat. In every direction the ancient saw, that it was exclusively the

woman's sphere to prepare viands of her household, has become, in proportion as civilization has perfected itself, an antiquated lie.

Even the minor domestic operations are tending to pass out of the circle of woman's labor. In modern cities our carpets are beaten, our windows cleaned, our floors polished, by machinery, or extra domestic, and often male labor. Change has gone much farther than to the mere taking from us of the preparation of the materials from which the clothing is formed. Already the domestic sewing-machine, which has supplanted almost entirely the ancient needle, begins to become antiquated, and a thousand machines driven in factories by central engines are supplying not only the husband and son, but the woman herself, with almost every article of clothing from vest to jacket; while among the wealthy classes, the male dress-designer with his hundred male-milliners and dress-makers is helping finally to explode the ancient myth, that it is woman's exclusive sphere, and a part of her domestic toil, to cut and shape the garments she or her household wear.

Year by year, day by day, there is a silently working but determined tendency for the sphere of woman's domestic labors to contract itself; and the contraction is marked exactly in proportion as that complex condition which we term "modern civilization" is advanced.

It manifests itself more in England and America than in Italy and Spain, more in great cities than in country places, more among the wealthier classes than the poorer, and is an unfailing indication of advancing modern civilization.

But it is not only, nor even mainly, in the sphere of woman's material domestic labors that change has touched her and shrunk her ancient field of labor.

Time was, when the woman kept her children about her knees till adult years were reached. Hers was the training and influence which shaped them. From the moment when the infant first lay on her breast, till her daughters left her for marriage and her sons went to take share in man's labor, they were continually under the mother's influence. To-day so complex have become even the technical and

simpler branches of education, so mighty and inexorable are the demands which modern civilization makes for specialized instruction and training for all individuals who are to survive and retain their usefulness under modern conditions, that, from the earliest years of its life, the child is of necessity largely removed from the hands of the mother, and placed in those of the specialized instructor. Among the wealthier classes, scarcely is the infant born when it passes into the hands of the trained nurse, and from hers on into the hands of the qualified teacher; till, at nine or ten, the son in certain countries often leaves his home forever for the public school, to pass on to the college and university; while the daughter, in the hands of trained instructors and dependents, owes in the majority of cases hardly more of her education or formation to maternal toil.

Even among our poorer classes, the infant school, and the public school, and later on the necessity for manual training, take the son and often the daughter as completely, and always increasingly as civilization advances, from the mother's control. So marked has this change in woman's ancient field of labor become, that a woman of almost any class may have borne many children and yet at middle age be found sitting alone in an empty house, all her offspring gone from her to receive training and instruction at the hands of others. The ancient statement that the training and education of her offspring is exclusively the duty of the mother, however true it may have been with regard to a remote past, has become an absolute misstatement; and the woman who should at the present day insist on entirely educating her own offspring would, in nine cases out of ten, inflict an irreparable injury on them, because she is incompetent.

But, if possible, yet more deeply and radically have the changes of modern civilization touched our ancient field of labor in another direction—in that very portion of the field of human labor which is peculiarly and organically ours, and which can never be wholly taken from us. Here the shrinkage has been larger than in any other direction, and touches us as women more vitally.

Time was, and still is, among almost all primitive and savage folk, when the first and all-important duty of the female to her society was to bear, to bear much, and to bear unceasingly! On her adequate and persistent performance of this passive form of labor, and on her successful feeding of her young from her own breast, depended, not merely the welfare, but often the very existence, of her tribe or nation. Where, as is the case among almost all barbarous peoples, the rate of infant mortality is high; where the unceasing casualties resulting from war, the chase, and acts of personal violence tend continually to reduce the number of adult males; where, surgical knowledge being still in its infancy, most wounds are fatal; where, above all, recurrent pestilence and famine, unfailing if of irregular recurrence, decimated the people, it has been all important that woman should employ her creative power to its very uttermost limits if the race were not at once to dwindle and die out. "May thy wife's womb never cease from bearing," is still to-day the highest expression of good will on the part of a native African chief to his departing guest. For, not only does the prolific woman in the primitive state contribute to the wealth and strength of her nation as a whole, but to that of her own male companion and of her family.

Where the social conditions of life are so simple that, in addition to bearing and suckling the child, it is reared and nourished through childhood almost entirely through the labor and care of the mother, requiring no expenditure of tribal or family wealth on its training or education, its value as an adult enormously outweighs, both to the state and the male, the trouble and expense of rearing it, which falls almost entirely on the individual woman who bears it. The man who has twenty children to become warriors and laborers is by so much the richer and the more powerful than he who has but one; while the state whose women are prolific and labor for and rear their children stands so far insured against destruction. Incessant and persistent child-bearing is thus truly the highest duty and the most socially esteemed occupation of the primitive woman, equalling fully in social importance the labor of the man as hunter and warrior.

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The advance of science and the amelioration of the physical conditions of life tend rapidly toward a diminution of human mortality. The infant death-rate among the upper classes in modern civilizations has fallen by more than one-half; while among poorer classes it is already, though slowly, falling: the increased knowledge of the laws of sanitation has made among all highly civilized peoples the depopulation by plague a thing of the past, and the discoveries of the next twenty or thirty years will probably do away for ever with the danger to man of zymotic disease.[2] Famines of the old desolating type have become an impossibility where rapid means of transportation convey the superfluity of one land to supply the lack of another; and war and deeds of violence, though still lingering among us, have already become episodal in the lives of nations as of individuals; while the vast advances in antiseptic surgery have caused even the effects of wounds and dismemberments to become only very partially fatal to human life. All these changes have tended to diminish human mortality and protract human life; and they have to-day already made it possible for a race not only to maintain its numbers, but even to increase them, with a comparatively small expenditure of woman's vitality in the passive labor of child-bearing.

But yet more seriously has the demand for woman's labor as child-bearer been diminished by change in another direction.

Every mechanical invention which lessens the necessity for rough, untrained, muscular, human labor, diminishes also the social demand upon woman as the producer in large masses of such laborers. Already throughout the modern civilized world we have reached a point at which the social demand is not merely for human creatures in the bulk for use as beasts of burden, but, rather, and only, for such human creatures as shall be so trained and cultured as to be fitted for the performance of the more complex duties of modern life. Not, now, merely for many men, but, rather, for few men, and those few, well-born and well-instructed, is the modern demand. And the woman who to-day merely produces twelve

children and suckles them, and then turns them loose on her society and family, is regarded, and rightly so, as a curse and down-draft, and not the productive laborer, of her community. Indeed, so difficult and expensive has become in the modern world the rearing and training of even one individual, in a manner suited to fit it for coping with the complexities and difficulties of civilized life, that, to the family as well as to the state, unlimited fecundity on the part of the female has already, in most cases, become an irremediable evil. It is thus in the case of the artisan, who at the cost of immense self-sacrifice must support and train his children till their twelfth or fourteenth year, if they are ever to become even skilled manual laborers, and who if his family be large often sinks beneath the burden, allowing his offspring, untaught and untrained, to become waste products of human life. So with the professional man, who by his mental toil is compelled to support and educate, at immense expense, his sons till they are twenty or older, and to sustain his daughters, often throughout their whole lives should they not marry, and to whom a large family proves often no less disastrous; while the state whose women produce recklessly large masses of individuals in excess of those for whom they can provide instruction and nourishment is a state, in so far, tending toward deterioration. The commandment to the modern woman is now not simply "Thou shalt bear," but rather, "Thou shalt not bear in excess of thy power to rear and train satisfactorily"; and the woman who should to-day appear at the door of a workhouse or the tribunal of the poor-law guardians followed by her twelve infants, demanding honorable sustenance for them and herself in return for the labor she had undergone in producing them, would meet with but short shrift. And the modern man who on his wedding-day should be greeted with the ancient good wish, that he might become the father of twenty sons and twenty daughters, would regard it as a malediction rather than a blessing. It is certain that the time is now rapidly approaching when child-bearing will be regarded rather as a lofty privilege, permissible only to those who have shown their power rightly to train and provide for their offspring, than a labor which in itself, and under whatever conditions performed, is beneficial to society.

Further, owing partly to the diminished demand for child-bearing, rising from the extreme difficulty and expense of rearing and education, and to many other complex social causes, to which we shall return later, millions of women in our modern societies are so placed as to be absolutely compelled to go through life not merely childless, but without sex relationship in any form whatever; while another mighty army of women is reduced by the dislocations of our civilization to accepting sexual relationships which almost negate child-bearing, and whose only product is physical and moral disease.

Thus, it has come to pass that vast numbers of us are, by modern social conditions, prohibited from child-bearing at all, and that even those among us who are child-bearers are required, in proportion as the class or race to which we belong stands high in the scale of civilization, to produce in most cases a limited number of offspring; so that, even for these of us, child-bearing and suckling, instead of filling the entire circle of female life from the first appearance of puberty to the end of middle age, becomes an episodal occupation, employing from three or four to ten or twenty of the threescore-and-ten-years which are allotted to human life. In such societies the statement (so profoundly true when made with regard to most savage societies, and even largely true with regard to those in the intermediate stages of civilization) that the main and continuous occupation of all women from puberty to age is the bearing and suckling of children, and that this occupation must fully satisfy all her needs for social labor and activity, becomes an antiquated and unmitigated misstatement.

Not only are millions of our women precluded from ever bearing a child, but for those of us who do bear the demand is ever increasingly in civilized societies coupled with the condition that if we would act socially we must restrict our powers.

Looking round, then, with the uttermost impartiality we can command, on the entire field of woman's ancient and traditional labors, we find that *fully three-fourths of it have shrunk away for ever, and that the remaining fourth still tends to shrink.*

It is this great fact, so often and so completely overlooked, which lies as the propelling force behind that vast and restless "Woman's Movement" which marks our day. It is *this* fact, whether clearly and intellectually grasped, or, as is more often the case, vaguely and painfully *felt,* which awakes in the hearts of the ablest modern European women their passionate, and at times it would seem almost incoherent, cry for new forms of labor and new fields for the exercise of their powers.

Thrown into strict logical form, our demand is this: We do not ask that the wheels of time should reverse themselves, or the stream of life flow backward. We do not ask that our ancient spinning-wheels be again resuscitated and placed in our hands; we do not demand that our old grindstones and hoes be returned to us, or that man should again betake himself entirely to his ancient province of war and the chase, leaving to us all domestic and civil labor. We do not even demand that society shall immediately so reconstruct itself that every woman may be again a child-bearer (deep and overmastering as lies the hunger for motherhood in every virile woman's heart!); neither do we demand that the children whom we bear shall again be put exclusively into our hands to train. This, we know, cannot be. The past material conditions of life have gone for ever; no will of man can recall them, but *this* is our demand: We demand that, in that strange new world that is arising alike upon the man and the woman, where nothing is as it was, and all things are assuming new shapes and relations, that in this new world we also shall have our share of honored and socially useful human toil, our full half of the labor of the Children of Woman. We demand nothing more than this, and we will take nothing less. *This is our* "WOMAN'S RIGHT!"

1911

Endnotes

- Note 1: A small boat developed for launching torpedoes more quickly than they could be from larger, slower, heavier warships;

"hydraulic lift": elevators developed for moving raw materials between floors in factories and in coal mines; "Maxim gun": the first automatic firearm, a recoil-operated machine gun invented in 1884.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: A 19th-century medical term for acute infectious diseases, named for the organism (*zyme* or *microzyme*) thought to cause the disease.Return to reference 2

TORU DUTT
1856–1877

"Papa says as there is no good opportunity to learn German now, we had better take up Sanskrit instead of doing nothing," Toru Dutt wrote to her friend Mary Martin in 1875. "I am very glad of this. I should so like to read the glorious epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, in the original. I shall be quite a Sanskrit Pundit when I revisit old Cambridge." This passage crystallizes the self-confident cosmopolitanism that intrigued Dutt's first English readers. In doing so it threatens to distort our image of this poet, translator, novelist, and essayist who died at the age of twenty-one. Dutt may have been as thoroughly steeped in European culture as this passage suggests—familiarly referring to "old Cambridge," and seeming to dismiss the study of Sanskrit as a stopgap until a German tutor could be found. But Dutt was by no means disdainful of Indian culture: although published posthumously, the loose translations of the Hindu legends collected in *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1882) served as the principal basis of her reputation as one of the most important poets of her time. Even as she references German, French, and English poets and poetic forms, the ballads and legends she re-creates in this volume were inspired by the Hindu hymns that brought her to tears as a child when her mother sang them to her.

Dutt's poetic commitments and forms were clearly influenced by her family background. Born into an affluent Bengali family, Dutt received an extraordinary education in European literature and

culture. Most of her family converted to Christianity when Dutt was six, a decision that cut them off from the Hindu community, but that enabled her to become one of the first Indian women to travel to Europe. (Ocean travel was forbidden to many high-caste Hindus.) Despite their enthusiasm for European culture, however, the Dutt family relationship to colonial power was not uncritical: Dutt's father resigned from his government position because of his recognition of the lack of opportunities for advancement available to Indian men.

Dutt's first major publication was a book of translations into English of French poetry, *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* (1876). This is the only work published during her lifetime. Her novel in French, *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d'Arvers* (1879), her unfinished novel in English, *The Young Spanish Maiden* (published in installments in the *Bengal Magazine* in 1878), and her most famous and important work, *Legends of Hindustan*, were all published after her death from tuberculosis.

Dutt's work was immediately singled out for its exceptional ease in moving between European—and particularly British—poetic forms, and Indian themes and narratives. It is also the case that, like her favorite English poet, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Dutt's poetry cannot be wholly divorced from her political commitments: even as *Legends of Hindustan* translates Hindu poems for an English-speaking audience, it also suggests a nationalist attachment to Indian culture and forms.

Our Casuarina Tree[1]

Like a huge Python, winding round and round
The rugged trunk, indented deep with scars,
Up to its very summit near the stars,
A creeper climbs, in whose embraces bound
No other tree could live. But gallantly
The giant wears the scarf, and flowers are hung
In crimson clusters all the boughs among,
Whereon all day are gathered bird and bee;
And oft at nights the garden overflows
With one sweet song that seems to have no close,
Sung darkling from our tree, while men repose.

When first my casement is wide open thrown
At dawn, my eyes delighted on it rest;
Sometimes, and most in winter,—on its crest
A grey baboon sits statue-like alone
Watching the sunrise; while on lower boughs
His puny offspring leap about and play;
And far and near kokilas[2] hail the day;
And to their pastures wend our sleepy cows;
And in the shadow, on the broad tank cast
By that hoar tree, so beautiful and vast,
The water-lilies spring, like snow enmassed.

But not because of its magnificence
Dear is the Casuarina to my soul:
Beneath it we have played; though years may roll,
O sweet companions, loved with love intense,
For your sakes, shall the tree be ever dear!
Blent with your images, it shall arise
In memory, till the hot tears blind mine eyes!

What is that dirge-like murmur that I hear
Like the sea breaking on a shingle-beach?
It is the tree's lament, an eerie speech,
That haply to the unknown land may reach.

Unknown, yet well-known to the eye of faith!
Ah, I have heard that wail far, far away
In distant lands, by many a sheltered bay,
When slumbered in his cave the water-wraith
And the waves gently kissed the classic shore
Of France or Italy, beneath the moon,
When earth lay trancèd in a dreamless swoon:
And every time the music rose,—before
Mine inner vision rose a form sublime,
Thy form, O Tree, as in my happy prime
I saw thee, in my own loved native clime.

Therefore I fain would consecrate a lay
Unto thy honour, Tree, beloved of those
Who now in blessed sleep, for aye, repose,
Dearer than life to me, alas! were they!
Mayst thou be numbered when my days are done
With deathless trees—like those in Borrowdale,[3]
Under whose awful branches lingered pale
"Fear, trembling Hope, and Death, the skeleton,
And Time the shadow;" and though weak the verse
That would thy beauty fain, on fain rehearse,
May Love defnd thee from Oblivion's curse.

1881

Endnotes

- Note 1: An enormous evergreen species native to the Indian subcontinent.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Sanskrit name for a cuckoo bird.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Valley in the Lake District of England. The Lake District was famous, in part, as the home of Romantic poets William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Robert Southey.Return to reference 3

Lakshman[1]

"Hark! Lakshman! Hark, again that cry!
It is,—it is my husband's voice!
Oh hasten, to his succour fly,
No more hast thou, dear friend, a choice.
He calls on thee, perhaps his foes
Environ him on all sides round,
That wail,—it means death's final throes!
Why standest thou, as magic-bound?

Is this time for thought,—oh gird
Thy bright sword on, and take thy bow!
He heeds not, hears not any word,
Evil hangs over us, I know!
Swift in decision, prompt in deed,
Brave unto rashness, can this be,
The man to whom all looked at need?
Is it my brother, that I see!

Ah no, and I must run alone,
For further here I cannot stay;
Art thou transformed to blind dumb stone!
Wherefore this impious, strange delay!
That cry,—that cry,—it seems to ring
Still in my ears,—I cannot bear
Suspense; if help we fail to bring
His death at least we both can share."

"Oh calm thyself, Videhan Queen,[2]
No cause is there for any fear,
Hast thou his prowess never seen?
Wipe off for shame that dastard tear!

What being of demonian birth
  Could ever brave his mighty arm?
Is there a creature on the earth
  That dares to work our hero harm?

The lion and the grisly bear
  Cower when they see his royal look,
Sun-staring eagles of the air
  His glance of anger cannot brook,
Pythons and cobras at his tread
  To their most secret coverts glide,
Bowed to the dust each serpent head
  Erect before in hooded pride.

Rakshases, Danavs,[3] demons, ghosts,
  Acknowledge in their hearts his might,
And slink to their remotest coasts,
  In terror at his very sight.
Evil to him! Oh fear it not,
  Whatever foes against him rise!
Banish for aye, the foolish thought,
  And be thyself,—bold, great, and wise.

He call for help! Canst thou believe
  He like a child would shriek for aid
Or pray for respite or reprieve—
  Not of such metal is he made!
Delusive was that piercing cry,—
  Some trick of magic by the foe;
He has a work,—he cannot die,
  Beseech me not from hence to go.

For here beside thee, as a guard
  'Twas he commanded me to stay,
And dangers with my life to ward
  If they should come across thy way.

Send me not hence, for in this wood
Bands scattered of the giants lurk,
Who on their wrongs and vengeance brood,
And wait the hour their will to work."

"Oh shame! And canst thou make my weal
A plea for lingering! Now I know
What thou art Lakshman! And I feel
Far better were an open foe.
Art thou a coward? I have seen
Thy bearing in the battle-fray
Where flew the death-fraught arrows keen,
Else had I judged thee so to-day.

But then thy leader stood beside!
Dazzles the cloud when shines the sun,
Reft of his radiance, see it glide
A shapeless mass of vapours dun;
So of thy courage,—or if not,
The matter is far darker dyed,
What makes thee loth to leave this spot?
Is there a motive thou wouldst hide?

He perishes—well, let him die!
His wife henceforth shall be mine own!
Can that thought deep imbedded lie
Within thy heart's most secret zone!
Search well and see! one brother takes
His kingdom,—one would take his wife!
A fair partition!—But it makes
Me shudder, and abhor my life.

Art thou in secret league with those
Who from his hope the kingdom rent?
A spy from his ignoble foes
To track him in his banishment?

And wouldst thou at his death rejoice?
I know thou wouldst, or sure ere now
When first thou heardst that well-known voice
Thou shouldst have run to aid, I trow.

Learn this,—whatever comes may come,
But I shall not survive my Love,—
Of all my thoughts here is the sum!
Witness it gods in heaven above.
If fire can burn, or water drown,
I follow him:—choose what thou wilt,
Truth with its everlasting crown,
Or falsehood, treachery, and guilt.

Remain here, with a vain pretence
Of shielding me from wrong and shame,
Or go and die in his defence
And leave behind a noble name.
Choose what thou wilt,—I urge no more,
My pathway lies before me clear,
I did not know thy mind before,
I know thee now,—and have no fear."

She said and proudly from him turned,—
Was this the gentle Sita? No.
Flames from her eyes shot forth and burned,
The tears therein had ceased to flow.
"Hear me, O Queen, ere I depart,
No longer can I bear thy words,
They lacerate my inmost heart
And torture me, like poisoned swords.

Have I deserved this at thine hand?
Of lifelong loyalty and truth
Is this the meed? I understand
Thy feelings, Sita, and in sooth

I blame thee not,—but thou mightst be
  Less rash in judgement. Look! I go,
Little I care what comes to me
  Wert thou but safe,—God keep thee so!

In going hence I disregard
  The plainest orders of my chief,
A deed for me,—a soldier,—hard
  And deeply painful, but thy grief
And language, wild and wrong, allow
  No other course. Mine be the crime,
And mine alone,—but oh, do thou
  Think better of me from this time.

Here with an arrow, lo, I trace
  A magic circle ere I leave,
No evil thing within this space
  May come to harm thee or to grieve.
Step not, for aught, across the line,
  Whatever thou mayst see or hear,
So shalt thou balk the bad design
  Of every enemy I fear.

And now farewell! What thou hast said,
  Though it has broken quite my heart,
So that I wish that I were dead—
  I would before, O Queen, we part
Freely forgive, for well I know
  That grief and fear have made thee wild,
We part as friends,—is it not so?”
  And speaking thus,—he sadly smiled.

“And oh ye sylvan gods that dwell
  Among these dim and sombre shades,
Whose voices in the breezes swell
  And blend with noises of cascades,

Watch over Sita, whom alone
I leave, and keep her safe from harm,
Till we return unto our own,
I and my brother, arm in arm.

For though ill omens round us rise
And frighten her dear heart, I feel
That he is safe. Beneath the skies
His equal is not,—and his heel
Shall tread all adversaries down,
Whoever they may chance to be.—
Farewell, O Sita! Blessings crown
And Peace for ever rest with thee!”

He said, and straight his weapons took
His bow and arrows pointed keen,
Kind,—nay, indulgent,—was his look,
No trace of anger there was seen,
Only a sorrow dark, that seemed
To deepen his resolve to dare
All dangers. Hoarse the vulture screamed,
As out he strode with dauntless air.

1882

Endnotes

- Note 1: The God Rama’s younger brother in the Hindu epic *Ramayana*. According to legend, Rama left Lakshman to guard his wife, Sita, when he went to capture the magical golden deer she desired. Upon discovering the deer is a demon, Rama killed him, but as the demon is dying, he cries out for help in Rama’s voice. Hearing the cry, Sita insists Lakshman go to help him, although they both know him to be invincible. Lakshman finally agrees to go, but before he leaves he draws a line that Sita is not allowed to cross as a way to protect her in his absence.

When the evil king Ravana appears disguised as a beggar, Sita crosses the line in order to give him alms and is abducted.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: A reference to Sita.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Group of demigod sons of Dana, associated with the waters of the heavens. “Rakshases”: mythical fanged demons that eat human flesh.Return to reference 3

Buttoo[1]

"Ho! Master of the wondrous art!
Instruct me in fair archery,
And buy for aye,—a grateful heart
That will not grudge to give thy fee."
Thus spoke a lad with kindling eyes,
A hunter's low-born son was he,—
To Dronacharjya, great and wise,
Who sat with princes round his knee.

Up Time's fair stream—far back,—oh far,
The great wise teacher must be sought!
The Kurus had not yet in war
With the Pandava[2] brethren fought.
In peace, at Dronacharjya's feet,
Magic and archery they learned,
A complex science, which we meet
No more, with ages past inurned.

"And who art thou," the teacher said,
"My science brave to learn so fain?
Which many kings who wear the thread
Have asked to learn of me in vain."
"My name is Buttoo," said the youth,
"A hunter's son, I know not Fear;"
The teacher answered, smiling smooth,
"Then know him from this time, my dear."

Unseen the magic arrow came,
Amidst the laughter and the scorn
Of royal youths,—like lightning flame
Sudden and sharp. They blew the horn,

As down upon the ground he fell,
Not hurt, but made a jest and game;—
He rose,—and waved a proud farewell,
But cheek and brow grew red with shame.

And lo,—a single, single tear
Dropped from his eyelash as he past,
"My place I gather is not here;
No matter,—what is rank or caste?
In us is honour, or disgrace,
Not out of us," 'twas thus he mused,
"The question is,—not wealth or place,
But gifts well used, or gifts abused."

"And I shall do my best to gain
The science that man will not teach,
For life is as a shadow vain,
Until the utmost goal we reach
To which the soul points. I shall try
To realize my waking dream,
And what if I should chance to die?
None miss one bubble from a stream."

So thinking, on and on he went,
Till he attained the forest's verge,
The garish day was well-nigh spent,
Birds had already raised its dirge.
Oh what a scene! How sweet and calm!
It soothed at once his wounded pride,
And on his spirit shed a balm
That all its yearnings purified.

What glorious trees! The sombre saul[3]
On which the eye delights to rest,
The betel-nut,[4]—a pillar tall,
With feathery branches for a crest,

The light-leaved tamarind[5] spreading wide,
The pale faint-scented bitter neem,[6]
The seemul,[7] gorgeous as a bride,
With flowers that have the ruby's gleam,

The Indian fig's[8] pavilion tent
In which whole armies might repose,
With here and there a little rent,
The sunset's beauty to disclose,
The bamboo boughs that sway and swing
'Neath bulbuls[9] as the south wind blows,
The mangoe-tope;[1] a close dark ring,
Home of the rooks and clamorous crows,

The champac, bok, and South-sea pine,[2]
The nagessur[3] with pendant flowers
Like ear-rings,—and the forest vine
That clinging over all, embowers,
The sirish° famed in Sanscrit song
Which rural maidens love to wear,
The peepul° giant-like and strong,
The bramble with its matted hair,

All these, and thousands, thousands more,
With helmet red, or golden crown,
Or green tiara, rose before
The youth in evening's shadows brown.
He passed into the forest,—there
New sights of wonder met his view,
A waving Pampas[4] green and fair
All glistening with the evening dew.

How vivid was the breast-high grass!
Here waved in patches, forest corn,—
Here intervened a deep morass,—

Here arid spots of verdure shorn
Lay open,—rock or barren sand,—
And here again the trees arose
Thick clustering,—a glorious band
Their tops still bright with sunset glows.—

Stirred in the breeze the crowding boughs,
And seemed to welcome him with signs,
Onwards and on,—till Buttoo's brows
Are gemmed with pearls, and day declines.
Then in a grassy open space
He sits and leans against a tree,
To let the wind blow on his face
And look around him leisurely.

Herds, and still herds, of timid deer
Were feeding in the solitude,
They knew not man, and felt no fear,
And heeded not his neighbourhood,
Some young ones with large eyes and sweet
Came close, and rubbed their foreheads smooth
Against his arms, and licked his feet,
As if they wished his cares to soothe.

"They touch me," he exclaimed with joy,
"They have no pride of caste like men,
They shrink not from the hunter-boy,
Should not my home be with them then?
Here in this forest let me dwell,
With these companions innocent,
And learn each science and each spell
All by myself in banishment.

A calm, calm life,—and it shall be
Its own exceeding great reward!
No thoughts to vex in all I see,

No jeers to bear or disregard;—
All creatures and inanimate things
Shall be my tutors; I shall learn
From beast, and fish, and bird with wings,
And rock, and stream, and tree, and fern.

With this resolve, he soon began
To build a hut, of reeds and leaves,
And when that needful work was done
He gathered in his store, the sheaves
Of forest corn, and all the fruit,
Date, plum, guava, he could find,
And every pleasant nut and root
By Providence for man designed,

A statue next of earth he made,
An image of the teacher wise,
So deft he laid, the light and shade,
On figure, forehead, face and eyes,
That any one who chanced to view
That image tall might soothly swear,
If he great Dronacharjya knew,
The teacher in his flesh was there.

Then at the statue's feet he placed
A bow, and arrows tipped with steel,
With wild-flower garlands interlaced,
And hailed the figure in his zeal
As Master, and his head he bowed,
A pupil reverent from that hour
Of one who late had disallowed
The claim, in pride of place and power.

By strainèd sense, by constant prayer,
By steadfastness of heart and will,
By courage to confront and dare,

All obstacles he conquered still;
A conscience clear,—a ready hand,
Joined to a meek humility,
Success must everywhere command,
How could he fail who had all three!

And now, by tests assured, he knows
His own God-gifted wondrous might,
Nothing to any man he owes,
Unaided he has won the fight;
Equal to gods themselves,—above
Wishmo and Drona,[5]—for his worth
His name, he feels, shall be with love
Reckoned with great names of the earth.

Yet lacks he not, in reverence
To Dronacharjya, who declined
To teach him,—nay, with e'en offence
That well might wound a noble mind,
Drove him away;—for in his heart
Meek, placable, and ever kind,
Resentment had not any part,
And Malice never was enshrined.

One evening, on his work intent,
Alone he practised Archery,
When lo! the bow proved false and sent
The arrow from its mark awry;
Again he tried,—and failed again;
Why was it? Hark!—A wild dog's bark!
An evil omen:—it was plain
Some evil on his path hung dark!

Thus many times he tried and failed,
And still that lean, persistent dog
At distance, like some spirit wailed,

Safe in the cover of a fog.
His nerves unstrung, with many a shout
He strove to frighten it away,
It would not go,—but roamed about,
Howling, as wolves howl for their prey.

Worried and almost in a rage,
One magic shaft at last he sent,
A sample of his science sage,
To quiet but the noises meant.
Unerring to its goal it flew,
No death ensued, no blood was dropped,
But by the hush the young man knew
At last that howling noise had stopped.

It happened on this very day
That the Pandava princes came
With all the Kuru princes gay
To beat the woods and hunt the game.
Parted from others in the chase,
Arjuna brave the wild dog found,—
Stuck still the shaft,—but not a trace
Of hurt, though tongue and lip were bound.

"Wonder of wonders! Didst not thou,
O Dronacharjya, promise me
Thy crown in time should deck my brow
And I be first in archery?
Lo! here, some other thou hast taught
A magic spell,—to all unknown;
Who has in secret from thee bought
The knowledge, in this arrow shown!"

Indignant thus Arjuna[6] spake
To his great Master when they met—
"My word, my honour, is at stake,

Judge not, Arjuna, judge not yet.
Come, let us see the dog,"—and straight
They followed up the creature's trace.
They found it, in the selfsame state,
Dumb, yet unhurt,—near Buttoo's place.

A hut,—a statue,—and a youth
In the dim forest,—what mean these?
They gazed in wonder, for in sooth
The thing seemed full of mysteries.
"Now who art thou that dar'st to raise
Mine image in the wilderness?
Is it for worship and for praise?
What is thine object? speak, confess."

"Oh Master, unto thee I came
To learn thy science. Name or pelf°
I had not, so was driven with shame,
And here I learn all by myself.
But still as Master thee revere,
For who so great in archery!
Lo, all my inspiration here,
And all my knowledge is from thee."

"If I am Master, now thou hast
Finished thy course, give me my due.
Let all the past, be dead and past,
Henceforth be ties between us new."
"All that I have, O Master mine,
All I shall conquer by my skill,
Gladly shall I to thee resign,
Let me but know thy gracious will."

"Is it a promise?" "Yea, I swear
So long as I have breath and life
To give thee all thou wilt." "Beware!

Rash promise ever ends in strife."
"Thou art my Master,—ask! oh ask!
From thee my inspiration came,
Thou canst not set too hard a task,
Nor aught refuse I, free from blame."

"If it be so,—Arjuna hear!"
Arjuna and the youth were dumb,
"For thy sake, loud I ask and clear,
Give me, O youth, thy right-hand thumb.
I promised in my faithfulness
No equal ever shall there be
To thee, Arjuna,—and I press
For this sad recompense—for thee."

Glanced the sharp knife one moment high,
The severed thumb was on the sod,
There was no tear in Buttoo's eye
He left the matter with his God.
"For this,"—said Dronacharjya,—"Fame
Shall sound thy praise from sea to sea,
And men shall ever link thy name
With Self-help, Truth, and Modesty."

1882

Endnotes

- Note 1: This story is based on a story from the *Mahabharata*, but while in the original, Ekalavya is the son of a king, in the poem, the principal character, Buttoo, is the low-born son of a hunter who goes to master archer, Dronacharjya, to learn archery.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In the *Mahabharata*, the Kurus and the Pandavas are rivals descended from the same line. Dronacharjya taught archery to both sides.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: A valuable timber tree.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Nut of the areca palm tree.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Also known as the Indian date palm.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Also known as Indian lilac.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Also known as the red or silk cotton tree because of its red flowers.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Also known as the banyan tree.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A medium-sized songbird, related to the thrush. The name is Persian.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A tope is a cluster of trees.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: An evergreen that grows to enormous height. "Champac": a sacred ornamental tree; a kind of magnolia. "Bok": Also known as the hummingbird tree, it has white, pink, or red flowers.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Also known as the Indian rose chestnut, it has fragrant flowers.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A reference to the South American pampas, or plains.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Drona is Dronacharjya; Wishmo is also known as Bhishma, an archer from the *Mahabharata*.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Arjuna is also from the *Mahabharata*: Dronacharjya's favorite student.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *shade tree*Return to reference °
- °: *sacred fig tree*Return to reference °
- °: *money*Return to reference °

France

1870[1]

Not dead,—oh no,—she cannot die!
  Only a swoon from loss of blood!
Levite[2] England passes her by,
Help, Samaritan! None is nigh;
  Who shall stanch me this sanguine flood?

Range the brown hair, it blinds her eyne,
  Dash cold water over her face!
Drowned in her blood, she makes no sign,
Give her a draught of generous wine.
  None heed, none hear, to do this grace.

Head of the human column, thus
  Ever in swoon wilt thou remain?
Thought, Freedom, Truth, quenched ominous,
Whence then shall Hope arise for us,
  Plunged in the darkness all again!

No, she stirs!—There's a fire in her glance,
  Ware, oh ware of that broken sword!
What, dare ye for an hour's mischance,
Gather around her, jeering France,
  Attila's own exultant horde?

Lo, she stands up,—stands up e'en now,
  Strong once more for the battle-fray,
Gleams bright the star, that from her brow
Lightens the world. Bow, nations, bow,
  Let her again lead on the way!

Endnotes

- Note 1: The speaker of the poem is mourning the possible defeat of France by Prussia in the war of 1870.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In the parable known as the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus relates how a Levite (a Jewish man descended from the tribe of Levi) refuses to help a fellow Jew who has been beaten and robbed and left by the side of the road. When a Samaritan passes by, he stops and helps the injured man, despite the mutual hatred between Jews and Samaritans.Return to reference 2

Sonnet—Baugmaree[1]

A sea of foliage girds our garden round,
But not a sea of dull unvaried green,
Sharp contrasts of all colours here are seen;
The light-green graceful tamarinds abound
Amid the mangoe clumps of green profound,
And palms arise, like pillars gray, between;
And o'er the quiet pools the seemuls° lean,
Red,—red, and startling like a trumpet's sound.
But nothing can be lovelier than the ranges
Of bamboos to the eastward, when the moon
Looks through their gaps, and the white lotus changes
Into a cup of silver. One might swoon
Drunken with beauty then, or gaze and gaze
On a primeval Eden, in amaze.

1882

Endnotes

- Note 1: Suburb of Calcutta and the location of Dutt's family's second home.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *flowering trees*Return to reference °

Sonnet—The Lotus

Love came to Flora[1] asking for a flower
That would of flowers be undisputed queen,
The lily and the rose, long, long had been
Rivals for that high honour. Bards of power
Had sung their claims. "The rose can never tower
Like the pale lily with her Juno mien"[2]—
"But is the lily lovelier? "Thus between
Flower-factions rang the strife in Psyche's[3] bower.
"Give me a flower delicious as the rose
And stately as the lily in her pride"—
"But of what colour?"—"Rose-red," Love first chose,
Then prayed,—"No, lily-white,—or, both provide;"
And Flora gave the lotus, "rose-red" dyed,
And "lily-white,"—the queenliest flower that blows.°

1882

Endnotes

- Note 1: Roman goddess of flowers.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The goddess Juno was the protector of the state. "Mien" means face: she is usually described as dignified in demeanor.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The Roman goddess of the soul.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *blooms*Return to reference °

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE
1859–1930

One of ten children, Arthur Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh on May 22, 1859, to parents of Irish descent. His father, Charles Altamont Doyle, worked as a civil servant but wished to be an artist; subject to depression and alcoholism for many years, he was eventually committed to an asylum in the 1880s. Despite the family's difficult circumstances, Conan Doyle's mother, Mary Foley, supported her son's passionate interest in reading and managed to send him at the age of nine to the preparatory school for the Roman Catholic Stonyhurst College, Britain's foremost Jesuit school. By the time Conan Doyle left Stonyhurst at the age of sixteen, however, he had rejected Christianity and become an agnostic.

From 1876 Conan Doyle studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh, where one of his teachers was Joseph Bell, a professor of clinical surgery. As Conan Doyle readily acknowledged in later years, Sherlock Holmes was modeled in part on Bell, who was remarkably skilled at deducing from minute physical details both his patients' ailments and their past histories and occupations. During this period Conan Doyle's medical training ran hand in hand with early forays into literary composition; he published his first story in *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* at the age of twenty. After serving as ship's doctor on a voyage to West Africa, Conan Doyle established a medical practice in Southsea on the south coast of England in 1882. Here, with much time on his hands thanks to a dearth of patients, he

began writing the detective stories that would make him famous. Sherlock Holmes's debut occurred in the novella *A Study in Scarlet*, which appeared in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* in 1887 and carried illustrations by Conan Doyle's father. After the publication of a second Holmes novella, *The Sign of Four*, a series of short stories titled "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" ran in *Strand Magazine* from July 1891.

Published in the February issue of 1892 with illustrations by Sidney Paget, "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" was the eighth of the series. While the menace of the story is supplied by the violent and sinister Dr. Roylott and his web of exotic connections, the central puzzle is presented in its title: "The speckled band!" were the dying words of Roylott's stepdaughter Julia Stoner, the sister of Holmes's client, but to what had she been referring? During its composition Doyle referred to the story as a "thriller"; in later years, when asked which of his tales was his favorite, he chose this one. Many fans have agreed; readers' polls over the years have frequently rated "The Speckled Band" the best Holmes story of all. Certainly it is viewed as a paradigmatic example of a "locked room" mystery, a subdivision of the detective story genre in which a murder takes place in a closed space with either no, or a very limited set of, suspects.

Despite the enormous success of the series, Conan Doyle resented the fact that it drew his time and energies away from writing what he considered to be more serious work, such as historical fiction. He decided to kill Sherlock off because, as he explained to his mother in 1891, the detective took his mind "from better things"; at the same time Conan Doyle lamented that "it means I must bury my pocketbook with him." "The Final Problem," a story published in 1893, appeared to present readers with the fatal plunge of both their hero and his evil adversary Professor Moriarty over the Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland; Watson tracks their two sets of footprints heading to the cliff above the waterfall and discovers evidence of a violent struggle, but can find no signs of any return. Fans were outraged—"You brute" began one letter to the

author—and after pressure from his publishers, Conan Doyle caved, producing first *The Hound of the Baskervilles* in 1901, which he cannily set before Holmes's death, and then later "resurrecting" his detective in 1903 in "The Empty House." In this story Watson learns the "truth" of that apparent Swiss death: Holmes had in fact hidden on a ledge within the cliff to escape the vengeance of Moriarty's henchman. Eventually the Sherlock Holmes canon encompassed fifty-six stories and four novellas. Of Conan Doyle's other writings only the Professor Challenger series (which includes *The Lost World* of 1912) enjoyed any real success; none of his historical novels ever captured the public's imagination like the two famous residents of 221b Baker Street.

Conan Doyle married in 1885; his wife, Louisa "Touie" Hawkins, died from tuberculosis in 1906. During her illness he developed an allegedly platonic relationship with Jean Leckie, whom he married in 1907; Conan Doyle had two children with his first wife and three with his second. Following the death of Touie, and the deaths of his son, brother, two brothers-in-law, and two nephews in and after World War I, Conan Doyle found considerable comfort in Christian Spiritualism, an occult religion that believed that contact could be made with the dead. The author's interest in the paranormal also manifested itself in other ways; it led, for instance, to his advocating in 1920 for the authenticity of a series of photographs of girls and fairies (the "Cottingley Fairies" were exposed as a hoax decades later) and dominated many of his later, nonfiction, writings. In earlier years Conan Doyle had participated in some of his country's important political and legal debates. His pamphlets on the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902 justified British military actions and led to his being knighted in 1902. Furthermore, his involvement in the George Edalji case—a miscarriage of justice in which a half-Indian man was wrongfully convicted of a crime—played an influential part in the establishment of the Court of Criminal Appeal in 1907. Conan Doyle died on July 7, 1930, and is buried in Hampshire.

The Speckled Band

In glancing over my notes of the seventy odd cases in which I have during the last eight years studied the methods of my friend Sherlock Holmes, I find many tragic, some comic, a large number merely strange, but none commonplace; for, working as he did rather for the love of his art than for the acquirement of wealth, he refused to associate himself with any investigation which did not tend towards the unusual, and even the fantastic.[1] Of all these varied cases, however, I cannot recall any which presented more singular features than that which was associated with the well-known Surrey family of the Roylotts of Stoke Moran.[2] The events in question occurred in the early days of my association with Holmes, when we were sharing rooms as bachelors, in Baker-street.[3] It is possible that I might have placed them upon record before, but a promise of secrecy was made at the time, from which I have only been freed during the last month by the untimely death of the lady to whom the pledge was given. It is perhaps as well that the facts should now come to light, for I have reasons to know there are widespread rumours as to the death of Dr. Grimesby Roylott which tend to make the matter even more terrible than the truth.

It was early in April, in the year ’83, that I woke one morning to find Sherlock Holmes standing, fully dressed, by the side of my bed. He was a late riser as a rule, and, as the clock on the mantel-piece showed me that it was only a quarter past seven, I blinked up at him in some surprise, and perhaps just a little resentment, for I was myself regular in my habits.

“Very sorry to knock you up,[4] Watson,” said he, “but it’s the common lot this morning. Mrs. Hudson has been knocked up, she retorted upon me, and I on you.”

“What is it, then? A fire?”

"No, a client. It seems that a young lady has arrived in a considerable state of excitement, who insists upon seeing me. She is waiting now in the sitting-room. Now, when young ladies wander about the Metropolis at this hour of the morning, and knock sleepy people up out of their beds, I presume that it is something very pressing which they have to communicate. Should it prove to be an interesting case, you would, I am sure, wish to follow it from the outset. I thought at any rate that I should call you, and give you the chance."

"My dear fellow, I would not miss it for anything."

I had no keener pleasure than in following Holmes in his professional investigations, and in admiring the rapid deductions, as swift as intuitions, and yet always founded on a logical basis, with which he unravelled the problems which were submitted to him. I rapidly threw on my clothes, and was ready in a few minutes to accompany my friend down to the sitting-room. A lady dressed in black and heavily veiled, who had been sitting in the window, rose as we entered.

"Good morning, madam," said Holmes, cheerily. "My name is Sherlock Holmes. This is my intimate friend and associate, Dr. Watson, before whom you can speak as freely as before myself. Ha, I am glad to see that Mrs. Hudson has had the good sense to light the fire. Pray draw up to it, and I shall order you a cup of hot coffee, for I observe that you are shivering."

"It is not cold which makes me shiver," said the woman in a low voice, changing her seat as requested.

"What then?"

"It is fear, Mr. Holmes. It is terror." She raised her veil as she spoke, and we could see that she was indeed in a pitiable state of agitation, her face all drawn and grey, with restless, frightened eyes, like those of some hunted animal. Her features and figure were those of a woman of thirty, but her hair was shot with premature grey, and her expression was weary and haggard. Sherlock Holmes ran her over with one of his quick, all-comprehensive glances.

"You must not fear," said he, soothingly, bending forward and patting her forearm. "We shall soon set matters right, I have no doubt. You have come in by train this morning, I see."

"You know me, then?"

"No, but I observe the second half of a return ticket in the palm of your left glove. You must have started early, and yet you had a good drive in a dog-cart,[5] along heavy roads, before you reached the station."

The lady gave a violent start, and stared in bewilderment at my companion.

"There is no mystery, my dear madam," said he, smiling. "The left arm of your jacket is spattered with mud in no less than seven places. The marks are perfectly fresh. There is no vehicle save a dog-cart which throws up mud in that way, and then only when you sit on the left-hand side of the driver."

"Whatever your reasons[6] may be, you are perfectly correct," said she. "I started from home before six, reached Leatherhead at twenty past, and came in by the first train to Waterloo.[7] Sir, I can stand this strain no longer, I shall go mad if it continues. I have no one to turn to—none, save only one, who cares for me, and he, poor fellow, can be of little aid. I have heard of you, Mr. Holmes; I have heard of you from Mrs. Farintosh, whom you helped in the hour of her sore need. It was from her that I had your address. Oh, sir, do you not think you could help me too, and at least throw a little light through the dense darkness which surrounds me? At present it is out of my power to reward you for your services, but in a month or two I shall be married, with the control of my own income, and then at least you shall not find me ungrateful."

Holmes turned to his desk, and unlocking it, drew out a small case-book which he consulted.

"Farintosh," said he. "Ah, yes, I recall the case; it was concerned with an opal tiara. I think it was before your time, Watson. I can only say, madam, that I shall be happy to devote the same care to your case as I did to that of your friend. As to reward, my profession is its reward; but you are at liberty to defray whatever expenses I

may be put to, at the time which suits you best. And now I beg that you will lay before us everything that may help us in forming an opinion upon the matter."

"Alas!" replied our visitor. "The very horror of my situation lies in the fact that my fears are so vague, and my suspicions depend so entirely upon small points, which might seem trivial to another, that even he to whom of all others I have a right to look for help and advice looks upon all that I tell him about it as the fancies of a nervous woman. He does not say so, but I can read it from his soothing answers and averted eyes. But I have heard, Mr. Holmes, that you can see deeply into the manifold wickedness of the human heart. You may advise me how to walk amid the dangers which encompass me."

"I am all attention, madam."

"My name is Helen Stoner, and I am living with my stepfather, who is the last survivor of one of the oldest Saxon families in England, the Roylotts of Stoke Moran, on the western border of Surrey."

Holmes nodded his head. "The name is familiar to me," said he.

"The family was at one time among the richest in England, and the estate extended over the borders into Berkshire in the north, and Hampshire in the west. In the last century, however, four successive heirs were of a dissolute and wasteful disposition, and the family ruin was eventually completed by a gambler, in the days of the Regency.[8] Nothing was left save a few acres of ground, and the two-hundred-year-old house, which is itself crushed under a heavy mortgage. The last squire dragged out his existence there, living the horrible life of an aristocratic pauper; but his only son, my stepfather, seeing that he must adapt himself to the new conditions, obtained an advance from a relative, which enabled him to take a medical degree, and went out to Calcutta,[9] where, by his professional skill and his force of character, he established a large practice. In a fit of anger, however, caused by some robberies which had been perpetrated in the house, he beat his native butler to death, and narrowly escaped a capital sentence. As it was, he

suffered a long term of imprisonment, and afterwards returned to England a morose and disappointed man.

"When Dr. Roylott was in India he married my mother, Mrs. Stoner, the young widow of Major-General Stoner, of the Bengal Artillery. My sister Julia and I were twins, and we were only two years old at the time of my mother's re-marriage. She had a considerable sum of money, not less than a thousand a year, and this she bequeathed to Dr. Roylott entirely whilst we resided with him, with a provision that a certain annual sum should be allowed to each of us in the event of our marriage. Shortly after our return to England my mother died—she was killed eight years ago in a railway accident near Crewe.[1] Dr. Roylott then abandoned his attempts to establish himself in practice in London, and took us to live with him in the old ancestral house at Stoke Moran. The money which my mother had left was enough for all our wants, and there seemed no obstacle to our happiness.

"But a terrible change came over our stepfather about this time. Instead of making friends and exchanging visits with our neighbours, who had at first been overjoyed to see a Roylott of Stoke Moran back in the old family seat, he shut himself up in his house, and seldom came out save to indulge in ferocious quarrels with whoever might cross his path. Violence of temper approaching to mania has been hereditary in the men of the family, and in my stepfather's case it had, I believe, been intensified by his long residence in the tropics. A series of disgraceful brawls took place, two of which ended in the police-court, until at last he became the terror of the village, and the folks would fly at his approach, for he is a man of immense strength, and absolutely uncontrollable in his anger.

"Last week he hurled the local blacksmith over a parapet[2] into a stream, and it was only by paying over all the money that I could gather together that I was able to avert another public exposure. He had no friends at all save the wandering gipsies, and he would give these vagabonds leave to encamp upon the few acres of bramble-covered land which represent the family estate, and would accept in return the hospitality of their tents, wandering away with them

sometimes for weeks on end. He has a passion also for Indian animals, which are sent over to him by a correspondent, and he has at this moment a cheetah and a baboon, which wander freely over his grounds, and are feared by the villagers almost as much as their master.

"You can imagine from what I say that my poor sister Julia and I had no great pleasure in our lives. No servant would stay with us, and for a long time we did all the work of the house. She was but thirty at the time of her death, and yet her hair had already begun to whiten, even as mine has."

"Your sister is dead, then?"

"She died just two years ago, and it is of her death that I wish to speak to you. You can understand that, living the life which I have described, we were little likely to see any one of our own age and position. We had, however, an aunt, my mother's maiden sister, Miss Honoria Westphail, who lives near Harrow,[3] and we were occasionally allowed to pay short visits at this lady's house. Julia went there at Christmas two years ago, and met there a half-pay Major of Marines,[4] to whom she became engaged. My stepfather learned of the engagement when my sister returned, and offered no objection to the marriage; but within a fortnight of the day which had been fixed for the wedding, the terrible event occurred which has deprived me of my only companion."

Sherlock Holmes had been leaning back in his chair with his eyes closed, and his head sunk in a cushion, but he half opened his lids now, and glanced across at his visitor.

"Pray be precise as to details," said he.

"It is easy for me to be so, for every event of that dreadful time is seared into my memory. The manor house is, as I have already said, very old, and only one wing is now inhabited. The bedrooms in this wing are on the ground floor, the sitting-rooms being in the central block of the buildings. Of these bedrooms the first is Dr. Roylott's, the second my sister's, and the third my own. There is no communication between them, but they all open out into the same corridor. Do I make myself plain?"

"Perfectly so."

"The windows of the three rooms open out upon the lawn. That fatal night Dr. Roylott had gone to his room early, though we knew that he had not retired to rest, for my sister was troubled by the smell of the strong Indian cigars which it was his custom to smoke. She left her room, therefore, and came into mine, where she sat for some time, chatting about her approaching wedding. At eleven o'clock she rose to leave me, but she paused at the door and looked back.

" 'Tell me, Helen,' said she, 'have you ever heard any one whistle in the dead of the night?'

" 'Never,' said I.

" 'I suppose that you could not possibly whistle yourself in your sleep?'

" 'Certainly not. But why?'

" 'Because during the last few nights I have always, about three in the morning, heard a low clear whistle. I am a light sleeper, and it has awakened me. I cannot tell where it came from—perhaps from the next room, perhaps from the lawn. I thought that I would just ask you whether you had heard it.'

" 'No, I have not. It must be those wretched gipsies in the plantation.'

" 'Very likely. And yet if it were on the lawn I wonder that you did not hear it also.'

" 'Ah, but I sleep more heavily than you.'

" 'Well, it is of no great consequence at any rate,' she smiled back at me, closed my door, and a few moments later I heard her key turn in the lock."

"Indeed," said Holmes. "Was it your custom always to lock yourselves in at night?"

"Always."

"And why?"

"I think that I mentioned to you that the Doctor kept a cheetah and a baboon. We had no feeling of security unless our doors were

locked."

"Quite so. Pray proceed with your statement."

"I could not sleep that night. A vague feeling of impending misfortune impressed me. My sister and I, you will recollect, were twins, and you know how subtle are the links which bind two souls which are so closely allied. It was a wild night. The wind was howling outside, and the rain was beating and splashing against the windows. Suddenly, amidst all the hubbub of the gale, there burst forth the wild scream of a terrified woman. I knew that it was my sister's voice. I sprang from my bed, wrapped a shawl round me, and rushed into the corridor. As I opened my door I seemed to hear a low whistle, such as my sister described, and a few moments later a clanging sound, as if a mass of metal had fallen. As I ran down the passage my sister's door was unlocked, and revolved slowly upon its hinges. I stared at it horror-stricken, not knowing what was about to issue from it. By the light of the corridor lamp I saw my sister appear at the opening, her face blanched with terror, her hands groping for help, her whole figure swaying to and fro like that of a drunkard. I ran to her and threw my arms round her, but at that moment her knees seemed to give way and she fell to the ground. She writhed as one who is in terrible pain, and her limbs were dreadfully convulsed. At first I thought that she had not recognised me, but as I bent over her she suddenly shrieked out in a voice which I shall never forget, 'Oh, my God! Helen! It was the band! The speckled band!' There was something else which she would fain have said, and she stabbed with her finger into the air in the direction of the Doctor's room, but a fresh convulsion seized her and choked her words. I rushed out, calling loudly for my stepfather, and I met him hastening from his room in his dressing-gown. When he reached my sister's side she was unconscious, and though he poured brandy down her throat, and sent for medical aid from the village, all efforts were in vain, for she slowly sank and died without having recovered her consciousness. Such was the dreadful end of my beloved sister."

"One moment," said Holmes; "are you sure about this whistle and metallic sound? Could you swear to it?"

"That was what the county coroner asked me at the inquiry. It is my strong impression that I heard it, and yet among the crash of the gale, and the creaking of an old house, I may possibly have been deceived."

"Was your sister dressed?"

"No, she was in her nightdress. In her right hand was found the charred stump of a match, and in her left a matchbox."

"Showing that she had struck a light and looked about her when the alarm took place. That is important. And what conclusions did the coroner come to?"

"He investigated the case with great care, for Dr. Roylott's conduct had long been notorious in the county, but he was unable to find any satisfactory cause of death. My evidence showed that the door had been fastened upon the inner side, and the windows were blocked by old-fashioned shutters with broad iron bars, which were secured every night. The walls were carefully sounded, and were shown to be quite solid all round, and the flooring was also thoroughly examined, with the same result. The chimney is wide, but is barred up by four large staples. It is certain, therefore, that my sister was quite alone when she met her end. Besides, there were no marks of any violence upon her."

"How about poison?"

"The doctors examined her for it, but without success."

"What do you think that this unfortunate lady died of, then?"

"It is my belief that she died of pure fear and nervous shock, though what it was which frightened her I cannot imagine."

"Were there gipsies in the plantation at the time?"

"Yes, there are nearly always some there."

"Ah, and what did you gather from this allusion to a band—a speckled band?"

"Sometimes I have thought that it was merely the wild talk of delirium, sometimes that it may have referred to some band of

people, perhaps to these very gipsies in the plantation. I do not know whether the spotted handkerchiefs which so many of them wear over their heads might have suggested the strange adjective which she used."

Holmes shook his head like a man who is far from being satisfied.

"These are very deep waters," said he; "pray go on with your narrative."

"Two years have passed since then, and my life has been until lately lonelier than ever. A month ago, however, a dear friend, whom I have known for many years, has done me the honour to ask my hand in marriage. His name is Armitage—Percy Armitage—the second son of Mr. Armitage, of Crane Water, near Reading.[5] My stepfather has offered no opposition to the match, and we are to be married in the course of the spring. Two days ago some repairs were started in the west wing of the building, and my bedroom wall has been pierced, so that I have had to move into the chamber in which my sister died, and to sleep in the very bed in which she slept. Imagine, then, my thrill of terror when last night, as I lay awake, thinking over her terrible fate, I suddenly heard in the silence of the night the low whistle which had been the herald of her own death. I sprang up and lit the lamp, but nothing was to be seen in the room. I was too shaken to go to bed again, however, so I dressed, and as soon as it was daylight I slipped down, got a dog-cart at the 'Crown' inn, which is opposite, and drove to Leatherhead, from whence I have come on this morning with the one object of seeing you and asking your advice."

"You have done wisely," said my friend. "But have you told me all?"

"Yes, all."

"Miss Roylott, you have not. You are screening your stepfather."

"Why, what do you mean?"

For answer Holmes pushed back the frill of black lace which fringed the hand that lay upon our visitor's knee. Five little livid spots, the marks of four fingers and a thumb, were printed upon the white wrist.

"You have been cruelly used," said Holmes.

The lady coloured deeply, and covered over her injured wrist. "He is a hard man," she said, "and perhaps he hardly knows his own strength."

There was a long silence, during which Holmes leaned his chin upon his hands and stared into the crackling fire.

"This is very deep business," he said at last. "There are a thousand details which I should desire to know before I decide upon our course of action. Yet we have not a moment to lose. If we were to come to Stoke Moran to-day, would it be possible for us to see over these rooms without the knowledge of your stepfather?"

"As it happens, he spoke of coming into town to-day upon some most important business. It is probable that he will be away all day, and that there would be nothing to disturb you. We have a housekeeper now, but she is old and foolish, and I could easily get her out of the way."

"Excellent. You are not averse to this trip, Watson?"

"By no means."

"Then we shall both come. What are you going to do yourself?"

"I have one or two things which I would wish to do now that I am in town. But I shall return by the twelve o'clock train, so as to be there in time for your coming."

"And you may expect us early in the afternoon. I have myself some small business matters to attend to. Will you not wait and breakfast?"

"No, I must go. My heart is lightened already since I have confided my trouble to you. I shall look forward to seeing you again this afternoon." She dropped her thick black veil over her face, and glided from the room.

"And what do you think of it all, Watson?" asked Sherlock Holmes, leaning back in his chair.

"It seems to me to be a most dark and sinister business."

"Dark enough, and sinister enough."

"Yet if the lady is correct in saying that the flooring and walls are sound, and that the door, window, and chimney are impassable, then her sister must have been undoubtedly alone when she met her mysterious end."

"What becomes, then, of these nocturnal whistles, and what of the very peculiar words of the dying woman?"

"I cannot think."

"When you combine the ideas of whistles at night, the presence of a band of gipsies who are on intimate terms with this old doctor, the fact that we have every reason to believe that the doctor has an interest in preventing his stepdaughter's marriage, the dying allusion to a band, and finally, the fact that Miss Helen Stoner heard a metallic clang, which might have been caused by one of those metal bars which secured the shutters falling back into their place, I think that there is good ground to think that the mystery may be cleared along those lines."

"But what, then, did the gipsies do?"

"I cannot imagine."

"I see many objections to any such theory."

"And so do I. It is precisely for that reason that we are going to Stoke Moran this day. I want to see whether the objections are fatal, or if they may be explained away. But what, in the name of the devil!"

The ejaculation had been drawn from my companion by the fact that our door had been suddenly dashed open, and that a huge man framed himself in the aperture. His costume was a peculiar mixture of the professional and of the agricultural, having a black top hat, a long frock coat, and a pair of high gaiters,[6] with a hunting-crop swinging in his hand. So tall was he that his hat actually brushed the cross bar of the doorway, and his breadth seemed to span it across from side to side. A large face, seared with a thousand wrinkles, burned yellow with the sun, and marked with every evil passion, was turned from one to the other of us, while his deep-set, bile-shot eyes, and his high thin fleshless nose, gave him somewhat the resemblance to a fierce old bird of prey.

"Which of you is Holmes?" asked this apparition.

"My name, sir, but you have the advantage of me," said my companion, quietly.

"I am Dr. Grimesby Roylott, of Stoke Moran."

"Indeed, Doctor," said Holmes, blandly. "Pray take a seat."

"I will do nothing of the kind. My stepdaughter has been here. I have traced her. What has she been saying to you?"

"It is a little cold for the time of the year," said Holmes.

"What has she been saying to you?" screamed the old man furiously.

"But I have heard that the crocuses promise well," continued my companion imperturbably.

"Ha! You put me off, do you?" said our new visitor, taking a step forward, and shaking his hunting-crop. "I know you, you scoundrel! I have heard of you before. You are Holmes the meddler."

My friend smiled.

"Holmes the busybody!"

His smile broadened.

"Holmes the Scotland-yard Jack-in-office."[7]

Holmes chuckled heartily. "Your conversation is most entertaining," said he. "When you go out close the door, for there is a decided draught."

"I will go when I have had my say. Don't you dare to meddle with my affairs. I know that Miss Stoner has been here—I traced her! I am a dangerous man to fall foul of! See here." He stepped swiftly forward, seized the poker, and bent it into a curve with his huge brown hands.

"See that you keep yourself out of my grip," he snarled, and hurling the twisted poker into the fireplace, he strode out of the room.

"He seems a very amiable person," said Holmes, laughing. "I am not quite so bulky, but if he had remained I might have shown him that my grip was not much more feeble than his own." As he spoke

he picked up the steel poker, and with a sudden effort straightened it out again.

"Fancy his having the insolence to confound me with the official detective force! This incident gives zest to our investigation, however, and I only trust that our little friend will not suffer from her imprudence in allowing this brute to trace her. And now, Watson, we shall order breakfast, and afterwards I shall walk down to Doctors' Commons,[8] where I hope to get some data which may help us in this matter."

It was nearly one o'clock when Sherlock Holmes returned from his excursion. He held in his hand a sheet of blue paper, scrawled over with notes and figures.

"I have seen the will of the deceased wife," said he. "To determine its exact meaning I have been obliged to work out the present prices of the investments with which it is concerned. The total income, which at the time of the wife's death was little short of £1,100, is now through the fall in agricultural prices not more than £750. Each daughter can claim an income of £250, in case of marriage. It is evident, therefore, that if both girls had married this beauty would have had a mere pittance, while even one of them would cripple him to a very serious extent. My morning's work has not been wasted, since it has proved that he has the very strongest motives for standing in the way of anything of the sort. And now, Watson, this is too serious for dawdling, especially as the old man is aware that we are interesting ourselves in his affairs, so if you are ready we shall call a cab and drive to Waterloo. I should be very much obliged if you would slip your revolver into your pocket. An Eley's No. 2[9] is an excellent argument with gentlemen who can twist steel pokers into knots. That and a tooth-brush are, I think, all that we need."

At Waterloo we were fortunate in catching a train for Leatherhead, where we hired a trap[1] at the station inn, and drove for four or five miles through the lovely Surrey lanes. It was a perfect day, with a bright sun and a few fleecy clouds in the

heavens. The trees and wayside hedges were just throwing out their first green shoots, and the air was full of the pleasant smell of the moist earth. To me at least there was a strange contrast between the sweet promise of the spring and this sinister quest upon which we were engaged. My companion sat in front of the trap, his arms folded, his hat pulled down over his eyes, and his chin sunk upon his breast, buried in the deepest thought. Suddenly, however, he started, tapped me on the shoulder, and pointed over the meadows.

"Look there!" said he.

A heavily-timbered park stretched up in a gentle slope, thickening into a grove at the highest point. From amidst the branches there jutted out the grey gables and high roof-tree[2] of a very old mansion.

"Stoke Moran?" said he.

"Yes, sir, that be the house of Dr. Grimesby Roylott," remarked the driver.

"There is some building going on there," said Holmes; "that is where we are going."

"There's the village," said the driver, pointing to a cluster of roofs some distance to the left; "but if you want to get to the house, you'll find it shorter to get over this stile,[3] and so by the footpath over the fields. There it is, where the lady is walking."

"And the lady, I fancy, is Miss Stoner," observed Holmes, shading his eyes. "Yes, I think we had better do as you suggest."

We got off, paid our fare, and the trap rattled back on its way to Leatherhead.

"I thought it as well," said Holmes, as we climbed the stile, "that this fellow should think we had come here as architects, or on some definite business. It may stop his gossip. Good afternoon, Miss Stoner. You see that we have been as good as our word."

Our client of the morning had hurried forward to meet us with a face which spoke her joy. "I have been waiting so eagerly for you," she cried, shaking hands with us warmly. "All has turned out splendidly. Dr. Roylott has gone to town, and it is unlikely that he will be back before evening."

"We have had the pleasure of making the doctor's acquaintance," said Holmes, and in a few words he sketched out what had occurred. Miss Stoner turned white to the lips as she listened.

"Good heavens!" she cried, "he has followed me, then."

"So it appears."

"He is so cunning that I never know when I am safe from him. What will he say when he returns?"

"He must guard himself, for he may find that there is some one more cunning than himself upon his track. You must lock yourself up from him to-night. If he is violent, we shall take you away to your aunt's at Harrow. Now, we must make the best use of our time, so kindly take us at once to the rooms which we are to examine."

The building was of grey, lichen-blotched stone, with a high central portion, and two curving wings, like the claws of a crab, thrown out on each side. In one of these wings the windows were broken, and blocked with wooden boards, while the roof was partly caved in, a picture of ruin. The central portion was in little better repair, but the right-hand block was comparatively modern, and the blinds in the windows, with the blue smoke curling up from the chimneys, showed that this was where the family resided. Some scaffolding had been erected against the end wall, and the stonework had been broken into, but there were no signs of any workmen at the moment of our visit. Holmes walked slowly up and down the ill-trimmed lawn, and examined with deep attention the outsides of the windows.

"This, I take it, belongs to the room in which you used to sleep, the centre one to your sister's, and the one next to the main building to Dr. Roylott's chamber?"

"Exactly so. But I am now sleeping in the middle one."

"Pending the alterations, as I understand. By the way, there does not seem to be any very pressing need for repairs at that end wall."

"There were none. I believe that it was an excuse to move me from my room."

"Ah! that is suggestive. Now, on the other side of this narrow wing runs the corridor from which these three rooms open. There

are windows in it, of course?"

"Yes, but very small ones. Too narrow for any one to pass through."

"As you both locked your doors at night your rooms were unapproachable from that side. Now, would you have the kindness to go into your room, and to bar your shutters."

Miss Stoner did so, and Holmes, after a careful examination through the open window, endeavoured in every way to force the shutter open, but without success. There was no slit through which a knife could be passed to raise the bar. Then with his lens[4] he tested the hinges, but they were of solid iron, built firmly into the massive masonry. "Hum!" said he, scratching his chin in some perplexity, "my theory certainly presents some difficulties. No one could pass these shutters if they were bolted. Well, we shall see if the inside throws any light upon the matter."

A small side-door led into the whitewashed corridor from which the three bedrooms opened. Holmes refused to examine the third chamber, so we passed at once to the second, that in which Miss Stoner was now sleeping, and in which her sister, had met her fate. It was a homely[5] little room, with a low ceiling and a gaping fireplace, after the fashion of old country houses. A brown chest of drawers stood in one corner, a narrow white-counterpaned bed in another, and a dressing-table on the left-hand side of the window. These articles, with two small wickerwork chairs, made up all the furniture in the room, save for a square of Wilton carpet[6] in the centre. The boards round and the panelling of the walls were brown, worm-eaten oak, so old and discoloured that it may have dated from the original building of the house. Holmes drew one of the chairs into a corner and sat silent, while his eyes travelled round and round and up and down, taking in every detail of the apartment.

"Where does that bell communicate with?" he asked at last, pointing to a thick bell-rope which hung down beside the bed, the tassel actually lying upon the pillow.

"It goes to the housekeeper's room."

"It looks newer than the other things?"

"Yes, it was only put there a couple of years ago."

"Your sister asked for it, I suppose?"

"No, I never heard of her using it. We used always to get what we wanted for ourselves."

"Indeed, it seemed unnecessary to put so nice a bell-pull there. You will excuse me for a few minutes while I satisfy myself as to this floor." He threw himself down upon his face with his lens in his hand, and crawled swiftly backwards and forwards, examining minutely the cracks between the boards. Then he did the same with the woodwork with which the chamber was panelled. Finally he walked over to the bed and spent some time in staring at it, and in running his eye up and down the wall. Finally he took the bell-rope in his hand and gave it a brisk tug.

"Why, it's a dummy," said he.

"Won't it ring?"

"No, it is not even attached to a wire. This is very interesting. You can see now that it is fastened to a hook just above where the little opening of the ventilator is."

"How very absurd! I never noticed that before."

"Very strange!" muttered Holmes, pulling at the rope. "There are one or two very singular points about this room. For example, what a fool a builder must be to open a ventilator into another room, when, with the same trouble, he might have communicated with the outside air!"

"That is also quite modern," said the lady.

"Done about the same time as the bell-rope," remarked Holmes.

"Yes, there were several little changes carried out about that time."

"They seem to have been of a most interesting character—dummy bell-ropes, and ventilators which do not ventilate. With your permission, Miss Stoner, we shall now carry our researches into the inner apartment."

Dr. Grimesby Roylott's chamber was larger than that of his stepdaughter, but was as plainly furnished. A camp bed, a small

wooden shelf full of books, mostly of a technical character, an armchair beside the bed, a plain wooden chair against the wall, a round table, and a large iron safe were the principal things which met the eye. Holmes walked slowly round and examined each and all of them with the keenest interest.

"What's in here?" he asked, tapping the safe.

"My stepfather's business papers."

"Oh! you have seen inside, then?"

"Only once, some years ago. I remember that it was full of papers."

"There isn't a cat in it, for example?"

"No. What a strange idea!"

"Well, look at this!" He took up a small saucer of milk which stood on the top of it.

"No; we don't keep a cat. But there is a cheetah and a baboon."

"Ah, yes, of course! Well, a cheetah is just a big cat, and yet a saucer of milk does not go very far in satisfying its wants, I daresay. There is one point which I should wish to determine." He squatted down in front of the wooden chair, and examined the seat of it with the greatest attention.

"Thank you. That is quite settled," said he, rising and putting his lens in his pocket. "Hullo! here is something interesting!"

The object which had caught his eye was a small dog lash[7] hung on one corner of the bed. The lash, however, was curled upon itself, and tied so as to make a loop of whipcord.

"What do you make of that, Watson?"

"It's a common enough lash. But I don't know why it should be tied."

"That is not quite so common, is it? Ah, me! it's a wicked world, and when a clever man turns his brains to crime it is the worst of all. I think that I have seen enough now, Miss Stoner, and, with your permission, we shall walk out upon the lawn."

I had never seen my friend's face so grim, or his brow so dark, as it was when we turned from the scene of this investigation. We had

walked several times up and down the lawn, neither Miss Stoner nor myself liking to break in upon his thoughts before he roused himself from his reverie.

"It is very essential, Miss Stoner," said he, "that you should absolutely follow my advice in every respect."

"I shall most certainly do so."

"The matter is too serious for any hesitation. Your life may depend upon your compliance."

"I assure you that I am in your hands."

"In the first place, both my friend and I must spend the night in your room."

Both Miss Stoner and I gazed at him in astonishment.

"Yes, it must be so. Let me explain. I believe that that is the village inn over there?"

"Yes, that is the 'Crown.' "

"Very good. Your windows would be visible from there?"

"Certainly."

"You must confine yourself to your room, on pretence of a headache, when your stepfather comes back. Then when you hear him retire for the night, you must open the shutters of your window, undo the hasp, put your lamp there as a signal to us, and then withdraw with everything which you are likely to want into the room which you used to occupy. I have no doubt that, in spite of the repairs, you could manage there for one night."

"Oh, yes, easily."

"The rest you will leave in our hands."

"But what will you do?"

"We shall spend the night in your room, and we shall investigate the cause of this noise which has disturbed you."

"I believe, Mr. Holmes, that you have already made up your mind," said Miss Stoner, laying her hand upon my companion's sleeve.

"Perhaps I have."

"Then for pity's sake tell me what was the cause of my sister's death."

"I should prefer to have clearer proofs before I speak."

"You can at least tell me whether my own thought is correct, and if she died from some sudden fright."

"No, I do not think so. I think that there was probably some more tangible cause. And now, Miss Stoner, we must leave you, for if Dr. Roylott returned and saw us, our journey would be in vain. Good-bye, and be brave, for if you will do what I have told you, you may rest assured that we shall soon drive away the dangers that threaten you."

Sherlock Holmes and I had no difficulty in engaging a bedroom and sitting-room at the 'Crown' Inn. They were on the upper floor, and from our window we could command a view of the avenue gate, and of the inhabited wing of Stoke Moran Manor House. At dusk we saw Dr. Grimesby Roylott drive past, his huge form looming up beside the little figure of the lad who drove him. The boy had some slight difficulty in undoing the heavy iron gates, and we heard the hoarse roar of the Doctor's voice, and saw the fury with which he shook his clenched fists at him. The trap drove on, and a few minutes later we saw a sudden light spring up among the trees as the lamp was lit in one of the sitting-rooms.

"Do you know, Watson," said Holmes, as we sat together in the gathering darkness, "I have really some scruples as to taking you to-night. There is a distinct element of danger."

"Can I be of assistance?"

"Your presence might be invaluable."

"Then I shall certainly come."

"It is very kind of you."

"You speak of danger. You have evidently seen more in these rooms than was visible to me."

"No, but I fancy that I may have deduced a little more. I imagine that you saw all that I did."

"I saw nothing remarkable save the bell rope, and what purpose that could answer I confess is more than I can imagine."

"You saw the ventilator, too?"

"Yes, but I do not think that it is such a very unusual thing to have a small opening between two rooms. It was so small that a rat could hardly pass through."

"I knew that we should find a ventilator before ever we came to Stoke Moran."

"My dear Holmes!"

"Oh, yes, I did. You remember in her statement she said that her sister could smell Dr. Roylott's cigar. Now, of course that suggests at once that there must be a communication between the two rooms. It could only be a small one, or it would have been remarked upon at the Coroner's inquiry. I deduced a ventilator."

"But what harm can there be in that?"

"Well, there is at least a curious coincidence of dates. A ventilator is made, a cord is hung, and a lady who sleeps in the bed dies. Does not that strike you?"

"I cannot as yet see any connection."

"Did you observe anything very peculiar about that bed?"

"No."

"It was clamped to the floor. Did you ever see a bed fastened like that before?"

"I cannot say that I have."

"The lady could not move her bed. It must always be in the same relative position to the ventilator and to the rope—for so we may call it, since it was clearly never meant for a bell-pull."

"Holmes," I cried, "I seem to see dimly what you are hinting at. We are only just in time to prevent some subtle and horrible crime."

"Subtle enough, and horrible enough. When a doctor does go wrong, he is the first of criminals. He has nerve and he has knowledge. Palmer and Pritchard were among the heads of their profession.[8] This man strikes even deeper, but I think, Watson, that we shall be able to strike deeper still. But we shall have horrors enough before the night is over; for goodness' sake let us have a

quiet pipe, and turn our minds for a few hours to something more cheerful."

About nine o'clock the light among the trees was extinguished, and all was dark in the direction of the Manor House. Two hours passed slowly away, and then, suddenly, just at the stroke of eleven, a single bright light shone out right in front of us.

"That is our signal," said Holmes, springing to his feet; "it comes from the middle window."

As we passed out he exchanged a few words with the landlord, explaining that we were going on a late visit to an acquaintance, and that it was possible that we might spend the night there. A moment later we were out on the dark road, a chill wind blowing in our faces, and one yellow light twinkling in front of us through the gloom to guide us on our sombre errand.

There was little difficulty in entering the grounds, for unrepaired breaches gaped in the old park wall. Making our way among the trees, we reached the lawn, crossed it, and were about to enter through the window, when out from a clump of laurel bushes there darted what seemed to be a hideous and distorted child, who threw itself on the grass with writhing limbs, and then ran swiftly across the lawn into the darkness.

"My God!" I whispered; "did you see it?"

Holmes was for the moment as startled as I. His hand closed like a vice upon my wrist in his agitation. Then he broke into a low laugh, and put his lips to my ear.

"It is a nice household," he murmured. "That is the baboon."

I had forgotten the strange pets which the Doctor affected. There was a cheetah, too; perhaps we might find it upon our shoulders at any moment. I confess that I felt easier in my mind when, after following Holmes' example and slipping off my shoes, I found myself inside the bedroom. My companion noiselessly closed the shutters, moved the lamp on to the table, and cast his eyes round the room. All was as we had seen it in the day-time. Then creeping up to me

and making a trumpet of his hand, he whispered into my ear again so gently that it was all that I could do to distinguish the words—

"The least sound would be fatal to our plans."

I nodded to show that I had heard.

"We must sit without a light. He would see it through the ventilator."

I nodded again.

"Do not go asleep; your very life may depend upon it. Have your pistol ready in case we should need it. I will sit on the side of the bed, and you in that chair."

I took out my revolver and laid it on the corner of the table.

Holmes had brought up a long thin cane, and this he placed upon the bed beside him. By it he laid the box of matches and the stump of a candle. Then he turned down the lamp, and we were left in darkness.

How shall I ever forget that dreadful vigil? I could not hear a sound, not even the drawing of a breath, and yet I knew that my companion sat open-eyed, within a few feet of me, in the same state of nervous tension in which I was myself. The shutters cut off the least ray of light, and we waited in absolute darkness. From outside came the occasional cry of a night bird, and once at our very window a long drawn, cat-like whine, which told us that the cheetah was indeed at liberty. Far away we could hear the deep tones of the parish clock, which boomed out every quarter of an hour. How long they seemed, those quarters! Twelve struck, and one, and two, and three, and still we sat waiting silently for whatever might befall.

Suddenly there was the momentary gleam of a light up in the direction of the ventilator, which vanished immediately, but was succeeded by a strong smell of burning oil and heated metal. Some one in the next room had lit a dark lantern.[9] I heard a gentle sound of movement, and then all was silent once more, though the smell grew stronger. For half an hour I sat with straining ears. Then suddenly another sound became audible—a very gentle, soothing sound, like that of a small jet of steam escaping continually from a

kettle. The instant that we heard it, Holmes sprang from the bed, struck a match, and lashed furiously with his cane at the bell-pull.

"You see it, Watson?" he yelled. "You see it?"

But I saw nothing. At the moment when Holmes struck the light I heard a low, clear whistle, but the sudden glare flashing into my weary eyes made it impossible for me to tell what it was at which my friend lashed so savagely. I could, however, see that his face was deadly pale, and filled with horror and loathing.

He had ceased to strike, and was gazing up at the ventilator, when suddenly there broke from the silence of the night the most horrible cry to which I have ever listened. It swelled up louder and louder, a hoarse yell of pain and fear and anger all mingled in the one dreadful shriek. They say that away down in the village, and even in the distant parsonage, that cry raised the sleepers from their beds. It struck cold to our hearts, and I stood gazing at Holmes, and he at me, until the last echoes of it had died away into the silence from which it rose.

"What can it mean?" I gasped.

"It means that it is all over," Holmes answered. "And perhaps, after all, it is for the best. Take your pistol, and we shall enter Dr. Roylott's room."

With a grave face he lit the lamp, and led the way down the corridor. Twice he struck at the chamber door without any reply from within. Then he turned the handle and entered, I at his heels, with the cocked pistol in my hand.

It was a singular sight which met our eyes. On the table stood a dark lantern with the shutter half open, throwing a brilliant beam of light upon the iron safe, the door of which was ajar. Beside this table, on the wooden chair, sat Dr. Grimesby Roylott, clad in a long grey dressing-gown, his bare ankles protruding beneath, and his feet thrust into red heelless Turkish slippers. Across his lap lay the short stock with the long lash which we had noticed during the day. His chin was cocked upwards, and his eyes were fixed in a dreadful rigid stare at the corner of the ceiling. Round his brow he had a peculiar yellow band, with brownish speckles, which seemed to be bound

tightly round his head. As we entered he made neither sound nor motion.

"The band! the speckled band!" whispered Holmes.

I took a step forward. In an instant his strange headgear began to move, and there reared itself from among his hair the squat diamond-shaped head and puffed neck of a loathsome serpent.

"It is a swamp adder!"[1] cried Holmes—"the deadliest snake in India. He has died within ten seconds of being bitten. Violence does, in truth, recoil upon the violent, and the schemer falls into the pit which he digs for another.[2] Let us thrust this creature back into its den, and we can then remove Miss Stoner to some place of shelter, and let the county police know what has happened."

As he spoke he drew the dog whip swiftly from the dead man's lap, and throwing the noose round the reptile's neck, he drew it from its horrid perch, and, carrying it at arm's length threw it into the iron safe, which he closed upon it.

Such are the true facts of the death of Dr. Grimesby Roylott, of Stoke Moran. It is not necessary that I should prolong a narrative which has already run to too great a length, by telling how we broke the sad news to the terrified girl, how we conveyed her by the morning train to the care of her good aunt at Harrow, of how the slow process of official inquiry came to the conclusion that the Doctor met his fate while indiscreetly playing with a dangerous pet. The little which I had yet to learn of the case was told me by Sherlock Holmes as we travelled back next day.

"I had," said he, "come to an entirely erroneous conclusion, which shows, my dear Watson, how dangerous it always is to reason from insufficient data. The presence of the gipsies, and the use of the word 'band,' which was used by the poor girl, no doubt, to explain the appearance which she had caught a hurried glimpse of by the light of her match, were sufficient to put me upon an entirely wrong scent. I can only claim the merit that I instantly reconsidered my position when, however, it became clear to me that whatever danger threatened an occupant of the room could not come either

from the window or the door. My attention was speedily drawn, as I have already remarked to you, to this ventilator, and to the bell rope which hung down to the bed. The discovery that this was a dummy, and that the bed was clamped to the floor, instantly gave rise to the suspicion that the rope was there as a bridge for something passing through the hole, and coming to the bed. The idea of a snake instantly occurred to me, and when I coupled it with my knowledge that the Doctor was furnished with a supply of creatures from India, I felt that I was probably on the right track. The idea of using a form of poison which could not possibly be discovered by any chemical test was just such a one as would occur to a clever and ruthless man who had had an Eastern training. The rapidity with which such a poison would take effect would also, from his point of view, be an advantage. It would be a sharp-eyed coroner indeed who could distinguish the two little dark punctures which would show where the poison fangs had done their work. Then I thought of the whistle. Of course, he must recall the snake before the morning light revealed it to the victim. He had trained it, probably by the use of the milk which we saw, to return to him when summoned.[3] He would put it through this ventilator at the hour that he thought best, with the certainty that it would crawl down the rope, and land on the bed. It might or might not bite the occupant, perhaps she might escape every night for a week, but sooner or later she must fall a victim.

"I had come to these conclusions before ever I had entered his room. An inspection of his chair showed me that he had been in the habit of standing on it, which, of course, would be necessary in order that he should reach the ventilator. The sight of the safe, the saucer of milk, and the loop of whipcord were enough to finally dispel any doubts which may have remained. The metallic clang heard by Miss Stoner was obviously caused by her father hastily closing the door of his safe upon its terrible occupant. Having once made up my mind, you know the steps which I took in order to put the matter to the proof. I heard the creature hiss, as I have no doubt that you did also, and I instantly lit the light and attacked it."

"With the result of driving it through the ventilator."

"And also with the result of causing it to turn upon its master at the other side. Some of the blows of my cane came home, and roused its snakish temper, so that it flew upon the first person it saw. In this way I am no doubt indirectly responsible for Dr. Grimesby Roylott's death, and I cannot say that it is likely to weigh very heavily upon my conscience."

1892

Endnotes

- Note 1: So extreme as to challenge belief; incredible.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A fictitious location. Surrey is a county southeast of London.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Street in central London.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, wake you up by knocking.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A horse-drawn cart with seats, originally designed to carry hunters and their hunting dogs.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Reasoning.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: London railway station. Leatherhead is a town in Surrey.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: From 1811 to 1820, the period when the son of George III functioned as ruler (Prince Regent) because of his father's insanity.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Major city (now Kolkata) in eastern India.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Town in northwest England.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Low wall.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Small town ten miles northwest of London.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Officer in the British military receiving reduced pay because not on active service.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Large town west of London.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Cloth or leather leggings.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Self-important official. Scotland Yard is the police headquarters in London.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Informal name of London civil-law establishment located near St. Paul's Cathedral that had in earlier times handled the registration of marriage licences, wills, and other legal documents. Copies of wills were at this time held at Somerset House on the Strand.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A small powerful revolver (Conan Doyle most likely meant the Webley No. 2, a pistol that fired cartridges manufactured by Eley).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A small two-wheeled carriage.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Horizontal beam in a roof that supports the upper ends of the rafters.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A step or set of steps for climbing over a fence or wall.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Magnifying glass.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Simple, cozy.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A good-quality, cut-pile carpet.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Whip.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: William Palmer (the "Rugeley Poisoner") was executed in 1856 for the murder of an acquaintance; Edward William Pritchard was hanged in 1865 for poisoning his wife and mother-in-law. Both men were doctors but hardly "heads of their profession."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A lantern with a sliding shutter or panel to dim or hide its light.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: An invented name for an imaginary reptile; there is no snake that completely fits the description given here.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare with Ecclesiastes 10:8: "He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it." The verse continues "and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Objections have been made to this solution on the grounds that snakes are deaf, cannot climb up ropes, and do not (usually) drink milk.Return to reference 3

AMY LEVY
1861–1889

Although Amy Levy died while still in her twenties, she left behind an impressive body of work: three novels, three books of poetry, and a number of short stories. She started her career young: her first major poem, "Xantippe: A Fragment," was published when she was still a teenager. After attending Brighton High School for Girls, a school founded on feminist principles, she went on to become only the second Jewish woman to attend Cambridge University. She left upon the publication of her first book of poetry, *Xantippe and Other Verses* (1881), most likely as a result of the sexism and anti-Semitism she experienced while enrolled. After leaving Cambridge, Levy traveled in Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, but also spent considerable time in London, where she met regularly with a group of intellectual women that included the writer and activist Olive Schreiner (whose work appears in this volume), Karl Marx's daughter Eleanor, and the sociologist, economist, and social reformer Beatrice Webb. While in Florence in 1886, Levy met and fell in love with Violet Page (who wrote under the pseudonym Vernon Lee) to whom she wrote several love poems, and she was introduced to Lee's circle of friends. She eventually became romantically involved with another member of this circle, the poet Dorothy Blomfield.

Oscar Wilde was just one of Levy's contemporaries who valued her work highly: in her obituary, he praised the "sincerity, directness, and melancholy" in her writings. "To write thus at six-and-twenty is

given to very few." Levy was both an accomplished poet and a witty and incisive writer of fiction. Not all her work was equally well received, however; her novel *Reuben Sachs, A Sketch* (1888) was regarded by some Jewish reviewers as anti-Semitic, and by some non-Jewish reviewers as confirming anti-Semitic stereotypes. Levy was not religious, but she appears to have valued her Jewish heritage, and these characterizations pained her deeply. The story included here, "Cohen of Trinity" (1889), is easily read as a response to her critics. Levy struggled with depression throughout her life, as the melancholy of many of her writings attests. She committed suicide on September 10, 1889, two months before her twenty-eighth birthday.

Xantippe.[1] A Fragment

What, have I waked again? I never thought
To see the rosy dawn, or ev'n this grey,
Dull, solemn stillness, ere the dawn has come;
The lamp burns low; low burns the lamp of life;
The still morn stays expectant, and my soul,
All weighted with a passive wonderment,
Waiteth and watcheth, waiteth for the dawn.
Come hither, maids; too soundly have ye slept
That should have watched me; nay, I would not chide—
Oft have I chidden, yet I would not chide
In this last hour;—now all should be at peace.
I have been dreaming in a troubled sleep
Of weary days I thought not to recall;
Of stormy days, whose storms are hushed long since;
Of gladsome days, of sunny days; alas!
In dreaming, all their sunshine seem'd so sad,
As though the current of the dark To-Be
Had flow'd, prophetic, through the happy hours.
And yet, full well, I know it was not thus;
I mind me sweetly of the summer days,
When, leaning from the lattice, I have caught
The fair, far glimpses of a shining sea;
And nearer, of tall ships which thronged the bay,
And stood out blackly from a tender sky,
All flecked with sulphur, azure, and bright gold;
And in the still, clear air have heard the hum
Of distant voices; and methinks there rose
No darker fount to mar or stain the joy
Which sprang ecstatic in my maiden breast,

Than just those vague desires, those hopes and fears,
Those eager longings, strong, though undefined,
Whose very sadness makes them seem so sweet,
What cared I for the merry mockeries
Of other maidens sitting at the loom?
Or for sharp voices, bidding me return
To maiden labour? Were we not apart,
I and my high thoughts, and my golden dreams,
My soul which yearned for knowledge, for a tongue
That should proclaim the stately mysteries
Of this fair world, and of the holy gods?
Then followed days of sadness, as I grew
To learn my woman-mind had gone astray,
And I was sinning in those very thoughts—
For maidens, mark, such are not woman's thoughts —
(And yet, 'tis strange, the gods who fashion us
Have given us such promptings). . . .
Fled the years,
Till seventeen had found me tall and strong,
And fairer, runs it, than Athenian maids
Are wont to seem; I had not learnt it well—
My lesson of dumb patience—and I stood
At Life's great threshold with a beating heart,
And soul resolved to conquer and attain. . . . .
Once, walking 'thwart the crowded market place,
With other maidens, bearing in the twigs,
White doves for Aphrodite's[2] sacrifice,
I saw him, all ungainly and uncouth,
Yet many gathered round to hear his words,
Tall youths and stranger-maidens—Sokrates[3]—
I saw his face and marked it, half with awe,
Half with a quick repulsion at the shape. . . .
The richest gem lies hidden furthest down,

And is the dearer for the weary search;
We grasp the shining shells which strew the shore,
Yet swift we fling them from us; but the gem
We keep for aye and cherish. So a soul,
Found after weary searching in the flesh
Which half repelled our senses, is more dear,
For that same seeking, than the sunny mind
Which lavish Nature marks with thousand hints
Upon a brow of beauty. We are prone
To everweigh such subtle hints, then deem,
In after disappointment, we are fooled. . . .
And when, at length, my father told me all,
That I should wed me with great Sokrates,
I foolish, wept to see at once cast down
The maiden image of a future love,
Where perfect body matched the perfect soul.
But slowly, softly did I cease to weep;
Slowly I 'gan to mark the magic flash
Leap to the eyes, to watch the sudden smile
Break round the mouth, and linger in the eyes;
To listen for the voice's lightest tone—
Great voice, whose cunning modulations seemed
Like to the notes of some sweet instrument.
So did I reach and strain, until at last
I caught the soul athwart the grosser flesh.
Again of thee, sweet Hope, my spirit dreamed!
I, guided by his wisdom and his love,
Led by his words, and counselled by his care,
Should lift the shrouding veil from things which be,
And at the flowing fountain of his soul
Refresh my thirsting spirit. . . .
And indeed,
In those long days which followed that strange day
When rites and song, and sacrifice and flow'rs,
Proclaimed that we were wedded, did I learn,
In sooth, a-many lessons; bitter ones

Which sorrow taught me, and not love inspired,
Which deeper knowledge of my kind impressed
With dark insistance on reluctant brain;—
But that great wisdom, deeper, which dispels
Narrowed conclusions of a half-grown mind,
And sees athwart the littleness of life
Nature's divineness, and her harmony,
Was never poor Xantippe's. . . .
I would pause,
And would recall no more, no more of life,
Than just the incomplete, imperfect dream
Of early summers, with their light and shade,
Their blossom-hopes, whose fruit was never ripe;
But something strong within me, some sad chord
Which loudly echoes to the later life,
Me to unfold the after-misery
Urges with plaintive wailing in my heart.
Yet, maidens, mark; I would not that ye thought
I blame my lord departed, for he meant
No evil, so I take it, to his wife.
'Twas only that the high philosopher,
Pregnant with noble theories and great thoughts,
Deigned not to stoop to touch so slight a thing
As the fine fabric of a woman's brain—
So subtle as a passionate woman's soul.
I think, if he had stooped a little, and cared,
I might have risen nearer to his height,
And not lain shattered, neither fit for use
As goodly household vessel, nor for that
Far finer thing which I had hoped to be. . . .
Death, holding high his retrospective lamp,
Shows me those first, far years of wedded life,
Ere I had learnt to grasp the barren shape
Of what the fates had destined for my life.
Then, as all youthful spirits are, was I
Wholly incredulous that Nature meant

So little, who had promised me so much.
At first I fought my fate with gentle words,
With high endeavours after greater things—
Striving to win the soul of Sokrates,
Like some slight bird, who sings her burning love
To human master, till at length she finds
Her tender language wholly misconceived,
And that same hand whose kind caress she sought,
With fingers flippant flings the careless corn. . . .
I do remember how, one summer's eve,
He, seated in an arbour's leafy shade,
Had bade me bring fresh wine-skins.[4] . . .
As I stood
Ling'ring upon the threshold, half concealed
By tender foliage; and my spirit light
With draughts of sunny weather, did I mark
An instant, the gay group before mine eyes.
Deepest in shade, and facing where I stood,
Sat Plato,[5] with his calm face and low brows,
Which met above the narrow Grecian eyes;
The pale, thin lips just parted to the smile,
Which dimpled that smooth olive of his cheek.
His head a little bent, sat Sokrates,
With one swart finger raised admonishing,
And on the air were borne his changing tones.
Low lounging at his feet, one fair arm thrown
Around his knee (the other, high in air
Brandish'd a brazen amphor,° which yet rained
Bright drops of ruby on the golden locks
And temples with their fillets of the vine),
Lay Alkibiades[6] the beautiful.
And thus, with solemn tone, spake Sokrates:
"This fair Aspasia, which our Pericles[7]
Hath brought from realms afar, and set on high
In our Athenian city, hath a mind,

I doubt not, of a strength beyond her race;
And makes employ of it, beyond the way
Of women nobly gifted: woman's frail—
Her body rarely stands the test of soul;
She grows intoxicate with knowledge; throws
The laws of custom, order, 'neath her feet,
Feasting at life's great banquet with wide throat."
Then sudden, stepping from my leafy screen,
Holding the swelling wine-skin o'er my head,
With breast that heaved, and eyes and cheeks aflame,
Lit by a fury and a thought, I spake:
"By all great powers around us! can it be
That we poor women are empirical?
That gods who fashioned us did strive to make
Beings too fine, too subtly delicate,
With sense that thrilled response to ev'ry touch
Of nature's, and their task is not complete?
That they have sent their half-completed work
To bleed and quiver, here upon the earth?—
To bleed and quiver, and to weep and weep,
To beat its soul against the marble walls
Of men's cold hearts, and then at last to sin!"
I ceased, the first hot passion stayed and stemmed
And frighted by the silence: I could see,
Framed by the arbour foliage, which the sun
In setting softly gilded with rich gold,
Those upturned faces, and those placid limbs;
Saw Plato's narrow eyes and niggard mouth,[8]
Which half did smile and half did criticise,
One hand held up, the shapely fingers framed
To gesture of entreaty—"Hush, I pray,
Do not disturb her; let us hear the rest—
Follow her mood, for here's another phase
Of your black-browed Xantippe. . . ."

Then I saw
Young Alkibiades, with laughing lips
And half-shut eyes, contemptuous, shrugging up
Soft, snowy shoulders, till he brought the gold
Of flowing ringlets round about his breasts.
But Sokrates, all slow and solemnly,
Raised, calm, his face to mine, and sudden spake:
"I thank thee for the wisdom which thy lips
Have thus let fall among us: prythee tell
From what high source, from what philosophies
Didst cull the sapient[9] notion of thy words?"
Then stood I straight and silent for a breath;
Dumb, crushed with all that weight of cold
contempt;
But swiftly in my bosom there uprose
A sudden flame, a merciful fury sent
To save me; with both angry hands I flung
The skin upon the marble, where it lay
Spouting red rills and fountains on the white;
Then, all unheeding faces, voices, eyes,
I fled across the threshold, hair unbound—
White garment stained to redness—beating heart
Flooded with all the flowing tide of hopes
Which once had gushed out golden, now sent back
Swift to their sources, never more to rise. . . .
I think I could have borne the weary life,
The narrow life within the narrow walls,
If he had loved me; but he kept his love
For this Athenian city and her sons;
And, haply, for some stranger-woman,° bold
With freedom, thought, and glib philosophy. . . .
Ah me! the long, long weeping through the nights,
The weary watching for the pale-eyed dawn
Which only brought fresh grieving; then I grew
Fiercer, and cursed from out my inmost heart

The Fates which marked me an Athenian maid.
Then faded that vain fury; hope died out;
A huge despair was stealing on my soul,
A sort of fierce acceptance of my fate,—
He wished a household vessel—well! 'twas good,
For he should have it! He should have no more
The yearning treasure of a woman's love,
But just the baser treasure which he sought.—
I called my maidens, ordered out the loom,
And spun unceasing from the morn till eve;
Watching all keenly over warp and woof,
Weighing the white wool with a jealous hand.
I spun until, methinks, I spun away
The soul from out my body, the high thoughts
From out my spirit; till at last I grew
As ye have known me,—eye exact to mark
The texture of the spinning; ear all keen
For aimless talking when the moon is up,
And ye should be a-sleeping; tongue to cut
With quick incision, 'thwart the merry words
Of idle maidens. . . .
Only yesterday
My hands did cease from spinning; I have wrought
My dreary duties, patient till the last.
The gods reward me! Nay, I will not tell
The after years of sorrow; wretched strife
With grimmest foes—sad Want and Poverty;—
Nor yet the time of horror, when they bore
My husband from the threshold; nay, not when
The subtle weed[1] had wrought its deadly work.
Alas, alas, I was not there to sooth
The last great moment; never any thought
Of her that loved him—save at least the charge,
All earthly, that her body should not starve. . . .
You weep, you weep; I would not that ye wept,

Such tears are idle; with the young, such grief
Soon grows to gratulation, as, "her love
Was withered by misfortune; mine shall grow
All nurtured by the loving," or "her life
Was wrecked and shattered—mine shall smoothly sail.". . . .
Enough, enough. In vain, in vain, in vain!
The gods forgive me! Sorely have I sinned
In all my life. A fairer fate befall
You all that stand there. . . . .
Ha! the dawn has come;
I see a rosy glimmer—nay! it grows dark;
Why stand ye so in silence? throw it wide,
The casement, quick; why tarry?—give me air—
O fling it wide, I say, and give me light![2]

1881

Endnotes

- Note 1: Wife of Socrates, mother to their three sons.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Greek goddess of love, beauty, and pleasure.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Philosopher from Athens, often considered the founder of Western philosophy.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Commonly used to store wine.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Ancient Greek philosopher, student of Socrates, teacher of Aristotle. Plato wrote a series of dialogues featuring Socrates in conversation with other Athenian figures.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A prominent Athenian statesman who features in one of Plato's dialogues with Socrates about politics.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Greek politician and general, leader in Peloponnesian war. “Aspasia”: a foreign woman who moved to Athens and had a child with Pericles.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Stingy, miserly—this term derives from the Middle English *nigon* and the Old Norse *hniggw.*Return to reference 8
- Note 9: “Gather the wisdom”: Socrates is mocking Xantippe by using words she might not understand.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: According to Plato’s account in *Phaedo*, Socrates was tried for impiety and corrupting the youth and found guilty after a day. He was sentenced to death by drinking hemlock.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: According to his 19th-century biographer, Goethe’s last words were “More light!”Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *two-handled vessel*Return to reference °
- °: *Aspasia*Return to reference °

Magdalen[1]

All things I can endure, save one.
The bare, blank room where is no sun;
The parcelled hours; the pallet hard;
The dreary faces here within;
The outer women's cold regard;
The Pastor's iterated "sin";—
These things could I endure, and count
No overstrain'd, unjust amount;
No undue payment for such bliss—
Yea, all things bear, save only this:
That you, who knew what thing would be,
Have wrought this evil unto me.
It is so strange to think on still—
That you, that *you* should do me ill!
Not as one ignorant or blind,
But seeing clearly in your mind
How this must be which now has been,
Nothing aghast at what was seen.
Now that the tale is told and done,
It is so strange to think upon.

You were so tender with me, too!
One summer's night a cold blast blew,
Closer about my throat you drew
The half-slipt shawl of dusky blue.
And once my hand, on a summer's morn,
I stretched to pluck a rose; a thorn
Struck through the flesh and made it bleed
(A little drop of blood indeed!)
Pale grew your cheek; you stoopt and bound
Your handkerchief about the wound;

Your voice came with a broken sound;
With the deep breath your breast was riven;
I wonder, did God laugh in Heaven?

How strange, that *you* should work my woe!
How strange! I wonder, do you know
How gladly, gladly I had died
(And life was very sweet that tide)
To save you from the least, light ill?
How gladly I had borne your pain.
With one great pulse we seem'd to thrill,—
Nay, but we thrill'd with pulses twain.

Even if one had told me this,
"A poison lurks within your kiss,
Gall that shall turn to night his day:"
Thereon I straight had turned away—
Ay, tho' my heart had crack'd with pain—
And never kiss'd your lips again.

At night, or when the daylight nears,
I hear the other women weep;
My own heart's anguish lies too deep
For the soft rain and pain of tears.
I think my heart has turn'd to stone,
A dull, dead weight that hurts my breast;
Here, on my pallet-bed alone,
I keep apart from all the rest.
Wide-eyed I lie upon my bed,
I often cannot sleep all night;
The future and the past are dead,
There is no thought can bring delight.
All night I lie and think and think;
If my heart were not made of stone,
But flesh and blood, it needs must shrink
Before such thoughts. Was ever known

A woman with a heart of stone?

The doctor says that I shall die.
It may be so, yet what care I?
Endless reposing from the strife,
Death do I trust no more than life.
For one thing is like one arrayed,
And there is neither false nor true;
But in a hideous masquerade
All things dance on, the ages through.
And good is evil, evil good;
Nothing is known or understood
Save only Pain. I have no faith
In God or Devil, Life or Death.

The doctor says that I shall die.
You, that I knew in days gone by,
I fain would see your face once more,
Con° well its features o'er and o'er;
And touch your hand and feel your kiss,
Look in your eyes and tell you this:
That all is done, that I am free;
That you, through all eternity,
Have neither part nor lot in me.

1884

Endnotes

- Note 1: Mary Magdalen was a reformed prostitute who traveled with Jesus, supported his ministry, and according to the Gospels of the New Testament was the first to witness his resurrectionReturn to reference 1

Notes

- °: *study*Return to reference °

To Lallie

(*Outside the British Museum.*)

Up those Museum steps you came,
And straightway all my blood was flame,
O Lallie, Lallie!

The world (I had been feeling low)
In one short moment's space did grow
A happy valley.

There was a friend, my friend, with you;
A meagre dame, in peacock blue
Apparelled quaintly:

This poet-heart went pit-a-pat;
I bowed and smiled and raised my hat;
You nodded—faintly.

My heart was full as full could be;
You had not got a word for me,
Not one short greeting;

That nonchalant small nod you gave
(The tyrant's motion to the slave)
Sole mark'd our meeting.

Is it so long? Do you forget
That first and last time that we met?
The time was summer;

The trees were green; the sky was blue;
Our host presented me to you—

A tardy comer.

You look'd demure, but when you spoke
You made a little, funny joke,
Yet half pathetic.

Your gown was grey, I recollect,
I think you patronized the sect
They call "æsthetic."

I brought you strawberries and cream,
I plied you long about a stream
With duckweed laden;

We solemnly discussed the—heat.
I found you shy and very sweet,
A rosebud maiden.

Ah me, to-day! You passed inside
To where the marble gods abide:
Hermes, Apollo,

Sweet Aphrodite, Pan; and where,
For aye reclined, a headless fair
Beats all fairs hollow

And I, I went upon my way,
Well—rather sadder, let us say;
The world looked flatter.

I had been sad enough before,
A little less, a little more,
What *does* it matter?

1884

Ballade of an Omnibus

To see my love suffices me.

—Ballades in Blue China[1]

Some men to carriages aspire;
On some the costly hansoms° wait;
Some seek a fly, on job or hire;[2]
Some mount the trotting steed, elate.
I envy not the rich and great,
A wandering minstrel, poor and free,
I am contented with my fate—
An omnibus suffices me.

In winter days of rain and mire
I find within a corner strait;
The 'busmen know me and my lyre
From Brompton to the Bull-and-Gate.
When summer comes, I mount in state
The topmost summit, whence I see
Crœsus[3] look up, compassionate—
An omnibus suffices me.

I mark, untroubled by desire,
Lucullus' phaeton[4] and its freight.
The scene whereof I cannot tire,
The human tale of love and hate,
The city pageant, early and late
Unfolds itself, rolls by, to be
A pleasure deep and delicate.
An omnibus suffices me.

Princess, your splendour you require,
I, my simplicity; agree
Neither to rate lower nor higher.
An omnibus suffices me.

1889

Endnotes

- Note 1: Book of poetry by the Scottish writer Andrew Lang (1844–1912).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Contracted service; “fly”: a quick-traveling carriage; “job”: a brief, one-off engagement.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: King of Lydia, renowned for his wealth.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Sporty, open carriage; Lucullus was a Roman general, statesman, and conqueror.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *carriages*Return to reference °

New Love, New Life

I

She, who so long has lain
  Stone-stiff with folded wings,
Within my heart again
  The brown bird wakes and sings.

Brown nightingale, whose strain
  Is heard by day, by night,
She sings of joy and pain,
  Of sorrow and delight.

II

'Tis true,—in other days
  Have I unbarred the door;
He knows the walks and ways—
  Love has been here before.

Love blest and love accurst
  Was here in days long past;
This time is not the first,
  But this time is the last.

1889

Cohen of Trinity[1]

The news of poor Cohen's death came to me both as a shock and a surprise.

It is true that, in his melodramatic, self-conscious fashion, he had often declared a taste for suicide to be among the characteristics of his versatile race. And indeed in the Cambridge days, or in that obscure interval which elapsed between the termination of his unfortunate University career and the publication of *Gubernator*, there would have been nothing astonishing in such an act on his part. But now, when his book was in everyone's hands, his name on everyone's lips; when that recognition for which he had longed was so completely his; that success for which he had thirsted was poured out for him in so generous a draught—to turn away, to vanish without a word of explanation (he was so fond of explaining himself) is the very last thing one would have expected of him.

I

He came across the meadows towards the sunset, his upturned face pushed forwards catching the light, and glowing also with another radiance than the rich, reflected glory of the heavens.

A curious figure: slight, ungainly; shoulders in the ears; an awkward, rapid gait, half slouch, half hobble. One arm with its coarse hand swung like a bell-rope as he went; the other pressed a book close against his side, while the hand belonging to it held a few bulrushes and marsh marigolds.

Behind him streamed his shabby gown—it was a glorious afternoon of May—and his dusty trencher-cap pushed to the back of his head revealed clearly the oval contour of the face, the full, prominent lips, full, prominent eyes, and the curved beak of the nose with its restless nostrils.

"Who is he?" I asked of my companion, one of the younger dons.

"Cohen of Trinity."

He shook his head. The man had come up on a scholarship, but had entirely failed to follow up this preliminary distinction. He was no good, no good at all. He was idle, he was incompetent, he led a bad life in a bad set.

We passed on to other subjects, and out of sight passed the uncouth figure with the glowing face, the evil reputation, and that strange suggestion of latent force which clung to him.

The next time I saw Cohen was a few days later in Trinity quad. There were three or four men with him—little Cleaver of Sidney, and others of the same pattern. He was yelling and shrieking with laughter—at some joke of his own, apparently—and his companions were joining in the merriment.

Something in his attitude suggested that he was the ruling spirit of the group, that he was indeed enjoying the delights of addressing an audience, and appreciated to the full the advantages of the situation.

I came across him next morning, hanging moodily over King's Bridge, a striking contrast to the exuberant figure of yesterday.

He looked yellow and flaccid as a sucked lemon, and eyed the water flowing between the bridges with a suicidal air that its notorious shallowness made ridiculous.

Little Cleaver came up to him and threw out a suggestion of lecture.

Cohen turned round with a self-conscious, sham-tragedy air, gave a great guffaw, and roared out by way of answer the quotation from *Tom Cobb*:[2]

"The world's a beast, and I hate it!"

II

By degrees I scraped acquaintance with Cohen, who had interested me from the first.

I cannot quite explain my interest on so slight a knowledge; his manners were a distressing mixture of the *bourgeois* and the

canaille,[3] and a most unattractive lack of simplicity marked his whole personality. There never indeed existed between us anything that could bear the name of friendship. Our relations are easily stated: he liked to talk about himself, and I liked to listen.

I have sometimes reproached myself that I never grew fond of him; but a little reciprocity is necessary in these matters, and poor Cohen had not the art of being fond of people.

I soon discovered that he was desperately lonely and desperately unapproachable.

Once he quoted to me, with reference to himself, the lines from Browning:[4]

> . . . . Hath spied an icy fish
> That longed to 'scape the rock-stream where she lived,
> And thaw herself within the lukewarm waves,
> O' the lazy sea. . . .
> Only she ever sickened, found repulse
> At the other kind of water not her life,
> Flounced back from bliss she was not born to breathe,
> And in her old bonds buried her despair,
> Hating and loving warmth alike.

Of the men with whom I occasionally saw him—men who would have been willing enough to be his friends—he spoke with an open contempt that did him little credit, considering how unscrupulously he made use of them when his loneliness grew intolerable. There were others, too, besides Cleaver and his set, men of a coarser stamp—boon companions, as the story-books say—with whom, when the fit was on, he consented to herd.

But as friends, as permanent companions even, he rejected them, one and all, with a magnificence, an arrogant and bitter scorn that had in it a distinctly comic element.

I saw him once, to my astonishment, with Norwood, and it came out that he had the greatest admiration for Norwood and his set.

What connection there could be between those young puritans, aristocrats and scholars, the flower of the University—if prigs, a little, and *bornés*[5]—and a man of Cohen's way of life, it would be hard to say.

In aspiring to their acquaintance one scarcely knew if to accuse the man of an insane vanity or a pathetic hankering after better things.

Little Leuniger, who played the fiddle, a Jew, was the fashion at that time among them; but he resolutely turned the cold shoulder to poor Cohen, who, I believe, deeply resented this in his heart, and never lost an opportunity of hurling a bitterness at his compatriot.

A desire to stand well in one another's eyes, to make a brave show before one another, is, I have observed, a marked characteristic of the Jewish people.

As for little Leuniger, he went his way, and contented himself with saying that Cohen's family were not people that one "knew."

On the subject of his family, Cohen himself, at times savagely reserved, at others appallingly frank, volunteered little information, though on one occasion he had touched in with a few vivid strokes the background of his life.

I seemed to see it all before me: the little new house in Maida Vale;[6] a crowd of children, clamorous, unkempt; a sallow shrew in a torn dressing-gown, who alternately scolded, bewailed herself, and sank into moody silence; a fitful paternal figure coming and going, depressed, exhilarated according to the fluctuations of his mysterious financial affairs; and over everything the fumes of smoke, the glare of gas, the smell of food in preparation.

But, naturally enough, it was as an individual, not as the member of a family, that Cohen cared to discuss himself.

There was, indeed, a force, an exuberance, a robustness about his individuality that atoned—to the curious observer at least—for the presence of certain of the elements which helped to compose it. His unbounded arrogance, his enormous pretensions, alternating with and tempered by a bitter self-deprecation, overflowing at times

into self-reviling, impressed me, even while amusing and disgusting me.

It seemed that a frustrated sense of power, a disturbing consciousness of some blind force which sought an outlet, lurked within him and allowed him no rest.

Of his failure at his work he spoke often enough, scoffing at academic standards, yet writhing at his own inability to come up to them.

"On my honour," he said to me once, "I can't do better, and that's the truth. Of course you don't believe it; no one believes it. It's all a talk of wasted opportunities, squandered talents—but, before God, that part of my brain which won the scholarship has clean gone."

I pointed out to him that his way of life was not exactly calculated to encourage the working mood.

"Mood!" he shouted with a loud, exasperated laugh. "Mood! I tell you there's a devil in my brain and in my blood, and Heaven knows where it is leading me."

It led him this way and that at all hours of the day and night.

The end of the matter was not difficult to foresee, and I told him so plainly.

This sobered him a little, and he was quiet for three days, lying out on the grass with a lexicon and a pile of Oxford classics.

On the fourth the old mood was upon him and he rushed about like a hunted thing from dawn to sunset winding up with an entertainment which threatened his position as a member of the University.

He got off this time, however, but I shall never forget his face the next morning as he blustered loudly past Norwood and Blount in Trinity Street.

If he neglected his own work, he did, as far as could be seen, no other, unless fits of voracious and promiscuous reading may be allowed to count as such. I suspected him of writing verses, but on this matter of writing he always maintained, curiously enough, a profound reserve.

What I had for some time foreseen as inevitable at length came to pass. Cohen disappeared at a short notice from the University, no choice being given him in the matter.

I went off to his lodgings directly the news of his sentence reached me, but the bird had already flown, leaving no trace behind of its whereabouts.

As I stood in the dismantled little room, always untidy, but now littered from end to end with torn and dusty papers, there rose before my mind the vision of Cohen as I had first seen him in the meadows, with the bulrushes in his hand, the book beneath his arm, and on his face, which reflected the sunset, the radiance of a secret joy.

III

I did not see *Gubernator* till it was in its fourth edition, some three months after its publication and five years after the expulsion of Cohen from Trinity.

The name, Alfred Lazarus Cohen, printed in full on the title-page, revealed what had never before occurred to me, the identity of the author of that much-talked-of book with my unfortunate college acquaintance. I turned over the leaves with a new curiosity, and, it must be added, a new distrust. By-and-bye I ceased from this cursory, tentative inspection, I began at the beginning and finished the book at a sitting.

Everyone knows *Gubernator* by now, and I have no intention of describing it. Half poem, half essay, wholly unclassifiable, with a force, a fire, a vision, a vigour and felicity of phrase that carried you through its most glaring inequalities, its most appalling lapses of taste, the book fairly took the reader by storm.

Here was a clear case of figs from thistles.[7]

I grew anxious to know how Cohen was bearing himself under his success, which must surely have satisfied, for the time being at least, even his enormous claims.

Was that ludicrous, pathetic gap between his dues and his pretensions at last bridged over?

I asked myself this and many more questions, but a natural hesitation to hunt up the successful man where the obscure one had entirely escaped my memory prevented me from taking any steps to the renewal of our acquaintance.

But Cohen, as may be supposed, was beginning to be talked about, heard of and occasionally met, and I had no doubt that chance would soon give me the opportunity I did not feel justified in seeking.

There was growing up, naturally enough, among some of us Cambridge men a sense that Cohen had been hardly used, that (I do not think this was the case) he had been unjustly treated at the University. Lord Norwood, whom I came across one day at the club, remarked that no doubt his widespread popularity would more than atone to Cohen for the flouting he had met with at the hands of Alma Mater. He had read *Gubernator*; it was clever, but the book repelled him, just as the man, poor fellow, had always repelled him. The subject did not seem to interest him, and he went off shortly afterwards with Blount and Leuniger.

A week later I met Cohen at a club dinner, given by a distinguished man of letters. There were present notabilities of every sort—literary, dramatic, artistic—but the author of *Gubernator* was the lion of the evening. He rose undeniably to the situation, and roared as much as was demanded of him. His shrill, uncertain voice, pitched in a loud excited key, shot this way and that across the table. His strange, flexible face, with the full, prominent lips, glowed and quivered with animation. Surely this was his hour of triumph.

He had recognised me at once, and after dinner came round to me, his shoulders in his ears as usual, holding out his hand with a beaming smile. He talked of Cambridge, of one or two mutual acquaintances, without embarrassment. He could not have been less abashed if he had wound up his career at the University amid the cheers of an enthusiastic Senate House.

When the party broke up he came over to me again and suggested that I should go back with him to his rooms. He had never had much opinion of me, as he had been at no pains to

conceal, and I concluded that he was in a mood for unbosoming himself. But it seemed that I was wrong, and we walked back to Great Russell Street,[8] where he had two large, untidy rooms, almost in silence. He told me that he was living away from his family, an unexpected legacy from an uncle having given him independence.

"So the Fates aren't doing it by halves?" I remarked, in answer to this communication.

"Oh, no," he replied, with a certain moody irony, staring hard at me over his cigar.

"Do you know what success means?" he asked suddenly, and in the question I seemed to hear Cohen the *poseur,* always at the elbow of, and not always to be distinguished from, Cohen stark-nakedly revealed.

"Ah, no, indeed."

"It means—inundation by the second-rate."

"What does the fellow want?" I cried, uncertain as to the extent of his seriousness.

"I never," he said, "was a believer in the half-loaf theory."

"It strikes me, Cohen, that your loaf looks uncommonly like a whole one, as loaves go on this unsatisfactory planet."

He burst into a laugh.

"Nothing," he said presently, "can alter the relations of things—their permanent, essential relations. . . . 'They *shall* know, they *shall* understand, they *shall* feel what I am.' That is what I used to say to myself in the old days. I suppose, now, 'they' do know, more or less, and what of that?"

"I should say the difference from your point of view was a very great one. But you always chose to cry for the moon."

"Well," he said, quietly looking up, "it's the only thing worth having."

I was struck afresh by the man's insatiable demands, which looked at times like a passionate striving after perfection, yet went side by side with the crudest vanity, the most vulgar desire for recognition.

I rose soon after his last remark, which was delivered with a simplicity and an air of conviction which made one cease to suspect the mountebank;[9] we shook hands and bade one another good-night.

I never saw Cohen again.

Ten days after our renewal of acquaintance he sent a bullet through his brain, which, it was believed, must have caused instantaneous death. That small section of the public which interests itself in books discussed the matter for three days, and the jury returned the usual verdict. I have confessed that I was astonished, that I was wholly unprepared by my knowledge of Cohen for the catastrophe. Yet now and then an inkling of his motive, a dim, fleeting sense of what may have prompted him to the deed, has stolen in upon me.

In his hour of victory the sense of defeat had been strongest. Is it, then, possible that, amid the warring elements of that discordant nature, the battling forces of that ill-starred, ill-compounded entity, there lurked, clear-eyed and ever-watchful, a baffled idealist?

1889

Endnotes

- Note 1: One of the colleges of Cambridge University. "Cohen": a stereotypically Jewish name; also Hebrew for "priest."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A farce by comic playwright W. S. Gilbert (1836–1911) in which the eponymous hero pretends to be dead in order to avoid paying his debts.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: High class (*bourgeois*) and low class (*canaille*).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The passage is from Robert Browning's "Caliban upon Setebos" (see above, p. 443).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Snobs.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: An affluent residential district in West London.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Matthew 7:16: "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Location of the British Museum in London.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Quack, charlatan.Return to reference 9

RABINDRANATH TAGORE
1861–1941

One of the most famous and beloved writers of his time, Rabindranath Tagore has many claims to fame: he was the first—and to date, the only—Indian writer to win the Nobel prize for literature; he is the author of not one but two national anthems—for India and Sri Lanka; and he was an outspoken proponent of anticolonialist politics and international peace. Tagore first came to be known in India as the member of a prominent and well-educated family, and then as a talented and prolific writer. As a result of his travels in England, his work came to the attention of modernist authors such as W. B. Yeats and Ezra Pound, who took great interest in disseminating his poetry. Tagore then went on to become an important political voice during the period of decolonization. But Tagore's work is not exclusively literary or even political: in addition to his prodigious output as a writer of poetry, short stories, and novels, he also wrote plays and composed songs, was an innovative and committed educator who founded his own school, a painter, and an enthusiastic traveler who visited at least twenty-four countries between 1912 and 1932.

Tagore grew up without much formal education, although tutors occasionally supplemented the teaching of his older brothers and sister-in-law. The family effort was remarkably successful: Tagore published his first poem "Abhilash" ("Desire") when he was thirteen, and his first major work at sixteen. (In this latter project, he

temporarily succeeded in passing off one of these compositions as the lost work of a fictional seventeenth-century poet.) Despite being Pirali Brahmans (a traditionally stigmatized group), Tagore's family was central to the Bengali Renaissance, a political, philosophical, and literary movement that played an important role in the rise of anticolonialist and nationalist thought in India. Literary, theatrical, and musical events—both Indian and Western—often took place in his home. Tagore went to England in his late teens to study law, but he soon left school to immerse himself in British literary culture, with an emphasis on Shakespeare as well as English, Irish, and Scottish folk songs. He returned to India committed to reconciling European and Bengali literary traditions.

In 1883, Tagore married ten-year-old Bhabataraini, the uneducated daughter of an employee. (Child marriages were a common practice in India at this time.) Upon her marriage, she took the name Mrinalini. They eventually had five children, two of whom died in childhood. Mrinalini died in 1902.

The works included in this anthology are not Tagore's earliest productions, but they are among the first to be translated into English (by the author) and to be read by European and American audiences. *Gitanjali*, from which song 35 is taken, was central to his being awarded the Nobel Prize. The short stories are among the most popular and well known, both in India and in Britain. They take up themes that are typical of his work, having to do with the ordinary lives of ordinary people, particularly those living in the countryside. What is not represented in this selection is Tagore's nuanced relationship to anticolonialist and antinationalist politics. Throughout his life he was deeply committed to unity: between Muslims and Hindus as well as between nations. This commitment did occasionally create rifts: after initially supporting Mohandas Gandhi's "Swadeshi" (or independence) movement, for example, he later came to see it as divisive and so withdrew his support.

The depth of Tagore's political commitment was also evident when he renounced his knighthood, awarded by King George V in 1915. After the 1919 Massacre of Amritsar in which British troops

fired on a peaceful protest, killing many hundreds of people and wounding many more, Tagore wrote to the viceroy, Lord Chelmsford: "The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in their incongruous context of humiliation, and I for my part wish to stand, shorn of all special distinctions, by the side of those of my countrymen who for their so-called insignificance are liable to suffer a degradation not fit for human beings."

Gitanjali[1]

35

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action—
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

1910

Endnotes

- Note 1: Song offeringsReturn to reference 1

The Cabuliwallah[1]

My five years' old daughter Mini cannot live without chattering. I really believe that in all her life she has not wasted a minute in silence. Her mother is often vexed at this, and would stop her prattle, but I would not. To see Mini quiet is unnatural, and I cannot bear it long. And so my own talk with her is always lively.

One morning, for instance, when I was in the midst of the seventeenth chapter of my new novel, my little Mini stole into the room, and putting her hand into mine, said: "Father! Ramdayal the door-keeper calls a crow a krow! He doesn't know anything, does he?"

Before I could explain to her the differences of language in this world, she was embarked on the full tide of another subject. "What do you think, Father? Bhola says there is an elephant in the clouds, blowing water out of his trunk, and that is why it rains!"

And then, darting off anew, while I sat still making ready some reply to this last saying, "Father! what relation is Mother to you?"

"My dear little sister in the law!" I murmured involuntarily to myself, but with a grave face contrived to answer: "Go and play with Bhola, Mini! I am busy!"

The window of my room overlooks the road. The child had seated herself at my feet near my table, and was playing softly, drumming on her knees. I was hard at work on my seventeenth chapter, where Protrap Singh, the hero, had just caught Kanchanlata, the heroine, in his arms, and was about to escape with her by the third story window of the castle, when all of a sudden Mini left her play, and ran to the window, crying, "A Cabuliwallah! a Cabuliwallah!" Sure enough in the street below was a Cabuliwallah, passing slowly along. He wore the loose soiled clothing of his people, with a tall turban; there was a bag on his back, and he carried boxes of grapes in his hand.

I cannot tell what were my daughter's feelings at the sight of this man, but she began to call him loudly. "Ah!" I thought, "he will come in, and my seventeenth chapter will never be finished!" At which exact moment the Cabuliwallah turned, and looked up at the child. When she saw this, overcome by terror, she fled to her mother's protection, and disappeared. She had a blind belief that inside the bag, which the big man carried, there were perhaps two or three other children like herself. The pedlar meanwhile entered my doorway, and greeted me with a smiling face.

So precarious was the position of my hero and my heroine, that my first impulse was to stop and buy something, since the man had been called. I made some small purchases, and a conversation began about Abdurrahman, the Russians, the English, and the Frontier Policy.[2]

As he was about to leave, he asked: "And where is the little girl, sir?"

And I, thinking that Mini must get rid of her false fear, had her brought out.

She stood by my chair, and looked at the Cabuliwallah and his bag. He offered her nuts and raisins, but she would not be tempted, and only clung the closer to me, with all her doubts increased.

This was their first meeting.

One morning, however, not many days later, as I was leaving the house, I was startled to find Mini, seated on a bench near the door, laughing and talking, with the great Cabuliwallah at her feet. In all her life, it appeared, my small daughter had never found so patient a listener, save her father. And already the corner of her little *sari*[3] was stuffed with almonds and raisins, the gift of her visitor. "Why did you give her those?" I said, and taking out an eight-anna bit, I handed it to him. The man accepted the money without demur, and slipped it into his pocket.

Alas, on my return an hour later, I found the unfortunate coin had made twice its own worth of trouble! For the Cabuliwallah had given it to Mini, and her mother catching sight of the bright round

object, had pounced on the child with: "Where did you get that eight-anna bit?"

"The Cabuliwallah gave it me," said Mini cheerfully.

"The Cabuliwallah gave it you!" cried her mother much shocked. "Oh, Mini! how could you take it from him?"

I, entering at the moment, saved her from impending disaster, and proceeded to make my own inquiries.

It was not the first or second time, I found, that the two had met. The Cabuliwallah had overcome the child's first terror by a judicious bribery of nuts and almonds, and the two were now great friends.

They had many quaint jokes, which afforded them much amusement. Seated in front of him, looking down on his gigantic frame in all her tiny dignity, Mini would ripple her face with laughter, and begin: "O Cabuliwallah, Cabuliwallah, what have you got in your bag?"

And he would reply, in the nasal accents of the mountaineer: "An elephant!" Not much cause for merriment, perhaps; but how they both enjoyed the witticism! And for me, this child's talk with a grown-up man had always in it something strangely fascinating.

Then the Cabuliwallah, not to be behindhand, would take his turn: "Well, little one, and when are you going to the father-in-law's house?"[4]

Now most small Bengali maidens have heard long ago about the father-in-law's house; but we, being a little new-fangled, had kept these things from our child, and Mini at this question must have been a trifle bewildered. But she would not show it, and with ready tact replied: "Are *you* going there?"

Amongst men of the Cabuliwallah's class, however, it is well known that the words *father-in-law's house* have a double meaning. It is a euphemism for *jail*, the place where we are well cared for, at no expense to ourselves. In this sense would the sturdy pedlar take my daughter's question. "Ah," he would say, shaking his fist at an invisible policeman, "I will thrash my father-in-law!" Hearing this,

and picturing the poor discomfited relative, Mini would go off into peals of laughter, in which her formidable friend would join.

These were autumn mornings, the very time of year when kings of old went forth to conquest; and I, never stirring from my little corner in Calcutta, would let my mind wander over the whole world. At the very name of another country, my heart would go out to it, and at the sight of a foreigner in the streets, I would fall to weaving a network of dreams,—the mountains, the glens, and the forests of his distant home, with his cottage in its setting, and the free and independent life of far-away wilds. Perhaps the scenes of travel conjure themselves up before me, and pass and repass in my imagination all the more vividly, because I lead such a vegetable existence, that a call to travel would fall upon me like a thunderbolt. In the presence of this Cabuliwallah, I was immediately transported to the foot of arid mountain peaks, with narrow little defiles twisting in and out amongst their towering heights. I could see the string of camels bearing the merchandise, and the company of turbaned merchants, carrying some of their queer old firearms, and some of their spears, journeying downward towards the plains. I could see—but at some such point Mini's mother would intervene, imploring me to "beware of that man."

Mini's mother is unfortunately a very timid lady. Whenever she hears a noise in the street, or sees people coming towards the house, she always jumps to the conclusion that they are either thieves, or drunkards, or snakes, or tigers, or malaria or cockroaches, or caterpillars, or an English sailor. Even after all these years of experience, she is not able to overcome her terror. So she was full of doubts about the Cabuliwallah, and used to beg me to keep a watchful eye on him.

I tried to laugh her fear gently away, but then she would turn round on me seriously, and ask me solemn questions.

Were children never kidnapped?

Was it, then, not true that there was slavery in Cabul?

Was it so very absurd that this big man should be able to carry off a tiny child?

I urged that, though not impossible, it was highly improbable. But this was not enough, and her dread persisted. As it was indefinite, however, it did not seem right to forbid the man the house, and the intimacy went on unchecked.

Once a year in the middle of January Rahmun, the Cabuliwallah, was in the habit of returning to his country, and as the time approached he would be very busy, going from house to house collecting his debts. This year, however, he could always find time to come and see Mini. It would have seemed to an outsider that there was some conspiracy between the two, for when he could not come in the morning, he would appear in the evening.

Even to me it was a little startling now and then, in the corner of a dark room, suddenly to surprise this tall, loose-garmented, much bebagged man; but when Mini would run in smiling, with her, "O! Cabuliwallah! Cabuliwallah!" and the two friends, so far apart in age, would subside into their old laughter and their old jokes, I felt reassured.

One morning, a few days before he had made up his mind to go, I was correcting my proof sheets in my study. It was chilly weather. Through the window the rays of the sun touched my feet, and the slight warmth was very welcome. It was almost eight o'clock, and the early pedestrians were returning home, with their heads covered. All at once, I heard an uproar in the street, and, looking out, saw Rahmun being led away bound between two policemen, and behind them a crowd of curious boys. There were blood-stains on the clothes of the Cabuliwallah, and one of the policemen carried a knife. Hurrying out, I stopped them, and enquired what it all meant. Partly from one, partly from another, I gathered that a certain neighbour had owed the pedlar something for a Rampuri shawl, but had falsely denied having bought it, and that in the course of the quarrel, Rahmun had struck him. Now in the heat of his excitement, the prisoner began calling his enemy all sorts of names, when suddenly in a verandah of my house appeared my little Mini, with her usual exclamation: "O Cabuliwallah! Cabuliwallah!" Rahmun's face lighted up as he turned to her. He had no bag under

his arm to-day, so she could not discuss the elephant with him. She at once therefore proceeded to the next question: "Are you going to the father-in-law's house?" Rahmun laughed and said: "Just where I am going, little one!" Then seeing that the reply did not amuse the child, he held up his fettered hands. "Ah," he said, "I would have thrashed that old father-in-law, but my hands are bound!"

On a charge of murderous assault, Rahmun was sentenced to some years' imprisonment.

Time passed away, and he was not remembered. The accustomed work in the accustomed place was ours, and the thought of the once-free mountaineer spending his years in prison seldom or never occurred to us. Even my light-hearted Mini, I am ashamed to say, forgot her old friend. New companions filled her life. As she grew older, she spent more of her time with girls. So much time indeed did she spend with them that she came no more, as she used to do, to her father's room. I was scarcely on speaking terms with her.

Years had passed away. It was once more autumn and we had made arrangements for our Mini's marriage. It was to take place during the Puja Holidays.[5] With Durga returning to Kailas, the light of our home also was to depart to her husband's house, and leave her father's in the shadow.

The morning was bright. After the rains, there was a sense of ablution in the air, and the sun-rays looked like pure gold. So bright were they that they gave a beautiful radiance even to the sordid brick walls of our Calcutta lanes. Since early dawn to-day the wedding-pipes had been sounding, and at each beat my own heart throbbed. The wail of the tune, Bhairavi, seemed to intensify my pain at the approaching separation. My Mini was to be married to-night.

From early morning noise and bustle had pervaded the house. In the courtyard the canopy had to be slung on its bamboo poles; the chandeliers with their tinkling sound must be hung in each room and verandah. There was no end of hurry and excitement. I was sitting in my study, looking through the accounts, when some one entered,

saluting respectfully, and stood before me. It was Rahmun the Cabuliwallah. At first I did not recognise him. He had no bag, nor the long hair, nor the same vigour that he used to have. But he smiled, and I knew him again.

"When did you come, Rahmun?" I asked him.

"Last evening," he said, "I was released from jail."

The words struck harsh upon my ears. I had never before talked with one who had wounded his fellow, and my heart shrank within itself, when I realised this, for I felt that the day would have been better-omened had he not turned up.

"There are ceremonies going on," I said, "and I am busy. Could you perhaps come another day?"

At once he turned to go; but as he reached the door he hesitated, and said: "May I not see the little one, sir, for a moment?" It was his belief that Mini was still the same. He had pictured her running to him as she used, calling "O Cabuliwallah! Cabuliwallah!" He had imagined too that they would laugh and talk together, just as of old. In fact, in memory of former days he had brought, carefully wrapped up in paper, a few almonds and raisins and grapes, obtained somehow from a countryman, for his own little fund was dispersed.

I said again: "There is a ceremony in the house, and you will not be able to see any one to-day."

The man's face fell. He looked wistfully at me for a moment, said "Good morning," and went out.

I felt a little sorry, and would have called him back, but I found he was returning of his own accord. He came close up to me holding out his offerings and said: "I brought these few things, sir, for the little one. Will you give them to her?"

I took them and was going to pay him, but he caught my hand and said: "You are very kind, sir! Keep me in your recollection. Do not offer me money!—You have a little girl, I too have one like her in my own home. I think of her, and bring fruits to your child, not to make a profit for myself."

Saying this, he put his hand inside his big loose robe, and brought out a small and dirty piece of paper. With great care he unfolded this, and smoothed it out with both hands on my table. It bore the impression of a little hand. Not a photograph. Not a drawing. The impression of an ink-smeared hand laid flat on the paper. This touch of his own little daughter had been always on his heart, as he had come year after year to Calcutta, to sell his wares in the streets.

Tears came to my eyes. I forgot that he was a poor Cabuli fruit-seller, while I was—but no, what was I more than he? He also was a father.

That impression of the hand of his little *Pārbati*[6] in her distant mountain home reminded me of my own little Mini.

I sent for Mini immediately from the inner apartment. Many difficulties were raised, but I would not listen. Clad in the red silk of her wedding-day, with the sandal paste on her forehead, and adorned as a young bride, Mini came, and stood bashfully before me.

The Cabuliwallah looked a little staggered at the apparition. He could not revive their old friendship. At last he smiled and said: "Little one, are you going to your father-in-law's house?"

But Mini now understood the meaning of the word "father-in-law," and she could not reply to him as of old. She flushed up at the question, and stood before him with her bride-like face turned down.

I remembered the day when the Cabuliwallah and my Mini had first met, and I felt sad. When she had gone, Rahmun heaved a deep sigh, and sat down on the floor. The idea had suddenly come to him that his daughter too must have grown in this long time, and that he would have to make friends with her anew. Assuredly he would not find her, as he used to know her. And besides, what might not have happened to her in these eight years?

The marriage-pipes sounded, and the mild autumn sun streamed round us. But Rahmun sat in the little Calcutta lane, and saw before him the barren mountains of Afghanistan.

I took out a bank-note, and gave it to him, saying: "Go back to your own daughter, Rahmun, in your own country, and may the happiness of your meeting bring good fortune to my child!"

Having made this present, I had to curtail some of the festivities. I could not have the electric lights I had intended, nor the military band, and the ladies of the house were despondent at it. But to me the wedding feast was all the brighter for the thought that in a distant land a long-lost father met again with his only child.

1892

Endnotes

- Note 1: Also "Kabuliwala": someone who comes from Kabul, Afghanistan.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Abdurrahman Pasha was a powerful political leader in what is now northern Iraq; "the Russians": throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Russia and Great Britain were fierce rivals for dominance in Afghanistan as well as Central and Southeast Asia; "the Frontier Policy" is most likely a reference to British incursions into Afghanistan in the 1870s and 1880s. When the people of Kabul rebelled against British rule, the (British) government of India responded with a punitive expedition into the southern Afghan city of Kandahar. In many ways, the political and military conflicts to which Tagore alludes in this story set the stage for recent conflicts in the region.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Traditional Indian garment for women consisting of a long piece of draped silk or cotton.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The Cabuliwallah assumes that, upon marrying, the little girl will follow tradition and move in with her husband's family.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Ten-day Hindu festival marking the victory of the goddess Durga over Mahishasura.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Literally "daughter of the mountain."Return to reference 6

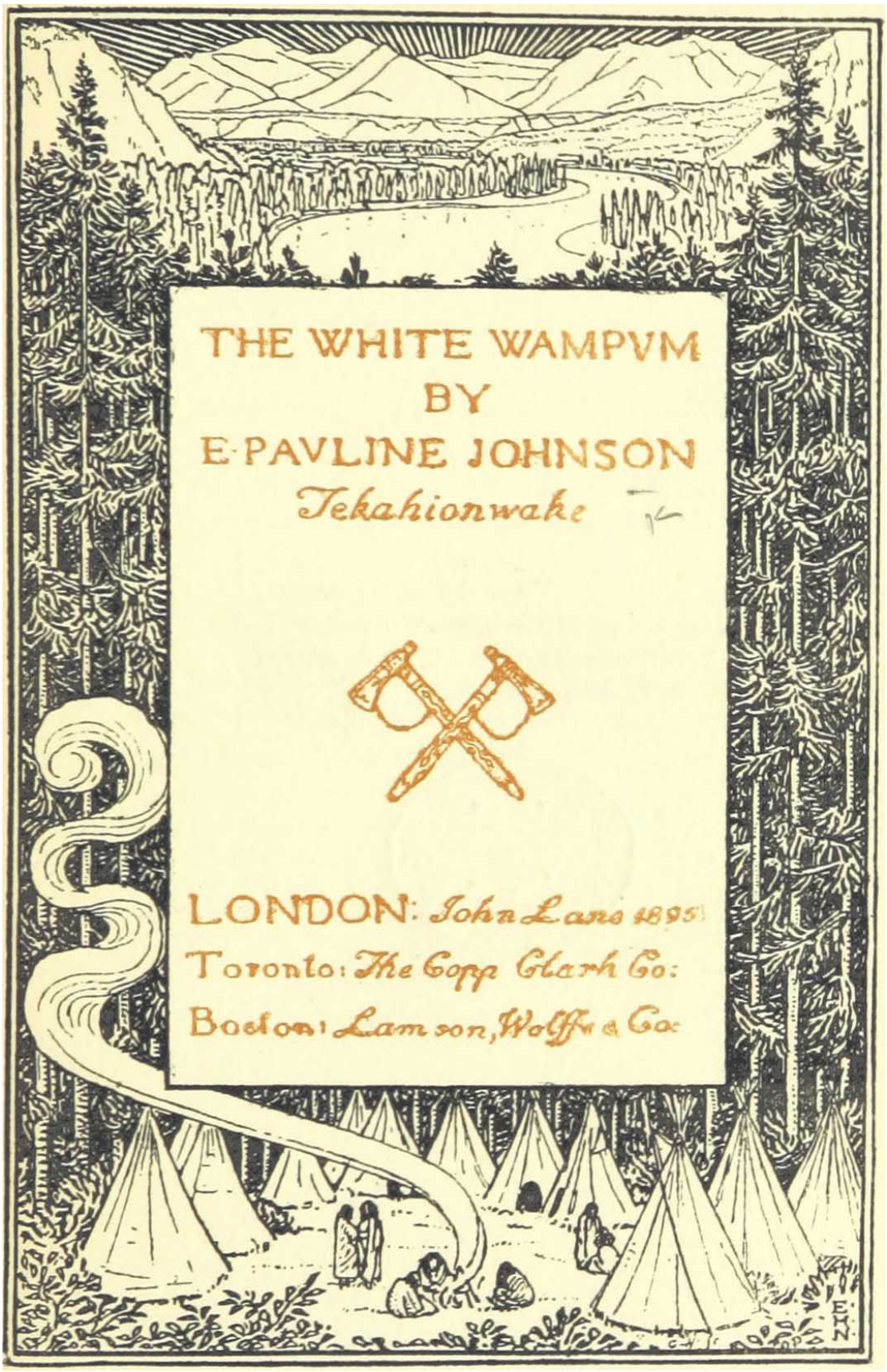
E. PAULINE JOHNSON/TEKAHIONWAKE
1861–1913

E. Pauline Johnson—also known by her stage and pen name of Tekahionwake (Dageh-eeon-wageh)—is one of the most famous and popular Canadian poets of her generation. Born in 1861 on the Six Nations Reserve in southern Ontario, she was the daughter of an English-born mother, Emily Howells Johnson, and a Mohawk and European father, George Johnson—tribal chief and Crown interpreter for the Six Nations. Although intermarriage between Indigenous peoples and Europeans was sometimes stigmatized by both groups, George Johnson's position as an intermediary between the Mohawk, the British, and the Government of Canada eased potential difficulties; the family socialized freely with both Indigenous and Anglo-Canadian communities. Johnson grew up understanding (though not speaking) the Mohawk language of Kanyen'kéha, and hearing the stories of her paternal grandfather, Chief John Smoke Johnson. She was educated at the Anglican Brantford Central Collegiate.

Johnson started writing in her teens and publishing in her early twenties. After her father's death left her family impoverished, she began reciting her poetry and stories on stage. During her lifetime her reputation rested as much on her role as a performer as on her published writing. Her highly successful performances brought together Johnson's Mohawk and Anglo Canadian identities: she often

wore Native dress for the first half of the evening, and then European dress for the second. As Veronica Strong-Boag and Carole Gerson point out, Johnson made "no effort to replicate the actual clothing of any specific Native group" when she performed. But she did often wear the ceremonial rug that had been used when her father made Queen Victoria's son, Prince Arthur of Connaught, an Iroquois chief in 1869, as well as "fur pelts, Iroquois silver medallions, wampum belts, and her father's hunting knife." She toured Canada, the United States, and England.

Johnson's poetry is both lyrical and political. It describes in vivid and moving detail the beauty and peace of nature as well as the pleasures of canoeing or walking through the fields and forests of her homeland. It addresses European abuse and exploitation of Indigenous peoples. And it is committed to a vision of Canada as British. In the late nineteenth century when Johnson was writing, Canada was officially a self-ruling "dominion," but it was still under the protection and ultimate authority of the British government. Johnson's was one of many Mohawk families whose loyalty to the British against the rebels in the American Revolution had been rewarded after the war with land grants in Canada. For many of such people, Great Britain remained an ultimate authority to which they turned when dissatisfied with local governmental decision-making.


THE WHITE WAMPVM
BY
E·PAVLINE JOHNSON
Tekahionwake
LONDON: John Lane 1895
Toronto: The Copp Clark Co:
Boston: Lamson, Wolffe & Co:
E·H·N·

Title page of *The White Wampum*, Johnson's first collection of poetry, which was published in London in 1895.

Johnson was especially outspoken on Indigenous women's issues, but she spoke out forcefully against the systematic marginalization and impoverishment of all Native peoples. As she wrote in her essay, "A Glimpse at the Grand River Indians," "A starving man is necessarily a degraded man; hunger will slay principle and virtue more effectively than anything else in the world, and one grows very indifferent to honour and nobility when absolute starvation gnaws out his body and he sees the good he rightfully owns being swallowed by another."

Johnson's poetry was popular during her lifetime and continues to be part of the standard curriculum in many Canadian schools. Her profile has also been raised in recent years by Margaret Atwood's *Pauline* (2013), an operetta based on Johnson's life and work.

Brant: A Memorial Ode

"Young Canada" with mighty force sweeps on,
To gain in power and strength before the dawn
That brings another era, when the sun
Shall rise again, but only shine upon
Her Indian graves and Indian memories.
For as the carmine in the twilight skies
Will fade as night comes on, so fades the race
That unto Might and therefore Right gives place.
And as white clouds float hurriedly and high
Across the crimson of a sunset sky
Altho' their depths are foamy as the snow
Their beauty lies in their vermillion glow.
So, Canada, thy plumes were hardly won
Without allegiance from thy Indian son.
Thy glories, like the cloud, enhance their charm
With red reflections from the Mohawk's arm.
Then meet we as one common brotherhood
In peace and love, with purpose understood
To lift a lasting tribute to the name
Of Brant[1]—who linked his own with Britain's fame.
Who bade his people leave their Valley Home
Where nature in her fairest aspects shone,
Where rolls the Mohawk River and the land
Is blest with every good from Heaven's hand,[2]
To sweep the tide of home affections back
And love the land where waves the Union Jack.°
What tho that home no longer ours? Today
The Six red nations[3] have their Canada.
And rest we here, no cause for us to rise
To seek protection under other skies.

Encircling us an arm both true and brave
Extends from far across the great salt wave.
Tho but a woman's hand 'tis firm, and strong
Enough to guard us from all fear of wrong,
A hand on which all British subjects lean—
The loving hand of England's noble Queen.

1886

Endnotes

- Note 1: Chief Joseph Brant led Iroquois supporters of the British in the fight to suppress the American rebels in the American War for Independence. After the war, the "Mohawk Loyalists" were rewarded for their loyalty with land in Canada.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Chief Brant led his followers from the Mohawk River in New York State to the Grand River reserve in Ontario.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The Six Nations of the Iroquois are the Mohawk, Seneca, Oneida, Cayuga, Onandaga, and Tuscarora.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *British flag*Return to reference °

The Song My Paddle Sings

West wind blow from your prairie nest?
Blow from the mountains, blow from the west.
The sail is idle, the sailor too;
O! wind of the west, we wait for you.
Blow, blow!
I have wooed you so,
But never a favour you bestow.
You rock your cradle the hills between,
But scorn to notice my white lateen.°

I stow the sail, unship the mast:[1]
I wooed you long but my wooing's past;
My paddle will lull you into rest.
O! drowsy wind of the drowsy west,
Sleep, sleep,
By your mountain steep,
Or down where the prairie grasses sweep!
Now fold in slumber your laggard wings,
For soft is the song my paddle sings.

August is laughing across the sky,
Laughing while paddle, canoe and I,
Drift, drift,
Where the hills uplift
On either side of the current swift.

The river rolls in its rocky bed;
My paddle is plying its way ahead;
Dip, dip,
While the waters flip
In foam as over their breast we slip.

And oh, the river runs swifter now;
The eddies circle about my bow.
Swirl, swirl!
How the ripples curl
In many a dangerous pool awhirl!

And forward far the rapids roar,
Fretting their margin for evermore.
Dash, dash,
With a mighty crash,
They seethe, and boil, and bound, and splash.

Be strong, O paddle! be brave, canoe!
The reckless waves you must plunge into.
Reel, reel.
On your trembling keel,
But never a fear my craft will feel.

We've raced the rapid, we're far ahead!
The river slips through its silent bed.
Sway, sway,
As the bubbles spray
And fall in tinkling tunes away.

And up on the hills against the sky,
A fir tree rocking its lullaby,
Swings, swings,
Its emerald wings,
Swelling the song that my paddle sings.

1892

Endnotes

- Note 1: Remove the mast (which held the sail).Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *triangular sail*Return to reference °

Lullaby of the Iroquois

Little brown baby-bird, lapped in your nest,
  Wrapped in your nest,
  Strapped in your nest,
Your straight little cradle-board rocks you to rest;
  Its hands are your nest;
  Its bands are your nest;
It swings from the down-bending branch of the oak;
You watch the camp flame, and the curling grey
  smoke;
But, oh, for your pretty black eyes sleep is best,—
Little brown baby of mine, go to rest.

Little brown baby-bird swinging to sleep,
  Winging to sleep,
  Singing to sleep,
Your wonder-black eyes that so wide open keep,
  Shielding their sleep,
  Unyielding to sleep,
The heron is homing, the plover is still,
The night-owl calls from his haunt on the hill,
Afar the fox barks, afar the stars peep,—
Little brown baby of mine, go to sleep.

1896

Canadian Born

We first saw light in Canada, the land beloved of God;
We are the pulse of Canada, its marrow and its blood:
And we, the men of Canada, can face the world and brag
That we were born in Canada beneath the British flag.

Few of us have the blood of kings, few are of courtly birth,
But few are vagabonds or rogues of doubtful name and worth;
And all have one credential that entitles us to brag—
That we were born in Canada beneath the British flag.

We've yet to make our money, we've yet to make our fame,
But we have gold and glory in our clean colonial name;
And every man's a millionaire if only he can brag
That he was born in Canada beneath the British flag.
No title and no coronet is half so proudly worn
As that which we inherited as men Canadian born.
We count no man so noble as the one who makes the brag
That he was born in Canada beneath the British flag.

The Dutch may have their Holland, the Spaniard have his Spain,

The Yankee to the south of us must south of us
remain;
For not a man dare lift a hand against the men who
brag
That they were born in Canada beneath the British
flag.

1900

From A Strong Race Opinion: On the Indian Girl in Modern Fiction

Every race in the world enjoys its own peculiar characteristics, but it scarcely follows that every individual of a nation must possess these prescribed singularities, or otherwise forfeit in the eyes of the world their nationality. Individual personality is one of the most charming things to be met with, either in a flesh and blood existence, or upon the pages of fiction, and it matters little to what race an author's heroine belongs, if he makes her character distinct, unique and natural.

The American book heroine of today is vari-coloured as to personality and action. The author does not consider it necessary to the development of her character, and the plot of the story to insist upon her having American-coloured eyes, an American carriage, an American voice, American motives, and an American mode of dying; he allows her to evolve an individuality ungoverned by nationalisms —but the outcome of impulse and nature and a general womanishness.

Not so the Indian girl in modern fiction, the author permits her character no such spontaneity, she must not be one of womankind at large, neither must she have an originality, a singularity that is not definitely "Indian." I quote "Indian" as there seems to be an impression amongst authors that such a thing as tribal distinction does not exist amongst the North American aborigines.

The term "Indian" signifies about as much as the term "European," but I cannot recall ever having read a story where the heroine was described as "a European." The Indian girl we meet in cold type, however, is rarely distressed by having to belong to any tribe, or to reflect any tribal characteristics. She is merely a wholesome sort of mixture of any band existing between the Mic Macs of Gaspe and the Kwaw-Kewlths of British Columbia,[1] yet

strange to say, that notwithstanding the numerous tribes, with their aggregate numbers reaching more than 122,000 souls in Canada alone, our Canadian authors can cull from this huge revenue of character, but one Indian girl, and stranger still that this lonely little heroine never had a prototype in breathing flesh-and-blood existence!

It is a deplorable fact, but there is only one of her. The story-writer who can create a new kind of Indian girl, or better still portray a "real live" Indian girl who will do something in Canadian literature that has never been done, but once. The general author gives the reader the impression that he has concocted the plot, created his characters, arranged his action, and at the last moment has been seized with the idea that the regulation Indian maiden will make a very harmonious background whereon to paint his pen picture, that, he, never having met this interesting individual, stretches forth his hand to his library shelves, grasps the first Canadian novelist he sees, reads up his subject, and duplicates it in his own work.

After a half dozen writers have done this, the reader might as well leave the tale unread as far as the interest touches upon the Indian character, for an unvarying experience tells him that this convenient personage will repeat herself with monotonous accuracy. He knows what she did and how she died in other romances by other romancers, and she will do and die likewise in his (she always does die, and one feels relieved that it is so, for she is too unhealthy and too unnatural to live).

The rendition of herself and her doings gains no variety in the pens of manifold authors, and the last thing that they will ever think of will be to study "The Indian Girl" from life, for the being we read of is the offspring of the writer's imagination and never existed outside the book covers that her name decorates. Yes, there is only one of her, and her name is "Winona."[2]

Once or twice she has borne another appellation, but it always has a "Winona" sound about it. Even Charles Mair, in that masterpiece of Canadian-Indian romances, "Tecumseh," could not resist "Winona."[3]

We meet her as a Shawnee, as a Sioux, as a Huron, and then, her tribe unnamed, in the vicinity of Brockville.[4]

She is never dignified by being permitted to own a surname, although, extraordinary to note, her father is always a chief, and had he ever existed, would doubtless have been as conservative as his contemporaries about the usual significance that his people attach to family name and lineage.

In addition to this most glaring error this surnameless creation is possessed with a suicidal mania. Her unhappy, self-sacrificing life becomes such a burden to both herself and the author that this is the only means by which they can extricate themselves from a lamentable tangle, though, as a matter of fact suicide is an evil positively unknown among Indians. To-day there may be rare instances where a man crazed by liquor might destroy his own life, but in the periods from whence "Winona's" character is sketched self-destruction was unheard of. This seems to be a fallacy which the best American writers have fallen a prey to. Even Helen Hunt Jackson, in her powerful and beautiful romance of "Ramona," has weakened her work deplorably by having no less than three Indians suicide while maddened by their national wrongs and personal grief.[5]

The hardest fortune that the Indian girl of fiction meets with is the inevitable doom that shadows her love affairs. She is always desperately in love with the young white hero, who in turn is grateful to her for services rendered the garrison in general and himself in particular during red days of war. In short, she is so much wrapped up in him that she is treacherous to her own people, tells falsehoods to her father and the other chiefs of her tribe, and otherwise makes herself detestable and dishonourable. Of course, this white hero never marries her! Will some critic who understands human nature, and particularly the nature of authors, please tell the reading public why marriage with the Indian girl is so despised in books and so general in real life? Will this good farseeing critic also tell us why the book-made Indian makes all the love advances to the white gentleman, though the real wild Indian girl (by the way, we are never given any stories of educated girls, though there are many

such throughout Canada) is the most retiring, reticent, noncommittal being in existence!

***

1892

Endnotes

- Note 1: Now "Mi'kmaq," from eastern Canada; the West Coast Kwakwaka'wakw were sometimes called by the name of a constituent member nation—here, the Kwaw-Kewlths, or the Kwagulth.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: "Winona" is the name of Hiawatha's mother in Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha*. Traditionally, it is a name members of the Lakota (Sioux) tribe give to their oldest daughters.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Charles Mair's historical drama *Tecumseh* (1886) was set during the War of 1812. "Winona" is the name of one of the play's "Indian Maidens."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A city that was settled by Iroquois and then Oswegatchie people, loyal to the British.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Jackson's *Ramona* (1884) was a best seller that described the federal government's mistreatment of Indigenous peoples in what is now southern California. Its heroine, Ramona, is Scottish Native American.Return to reference 5

RUDYARD KIPLING
1865–1936

Like many children born to upper- or middle-class Britons living in India in the nineteenth century, Rudyard Kipling was sent to Great Britain at the age of six to begin his education. For the next six years, he was desperately unhappy; his parents had chosen to board him in a rigidly Calvinistic home, and he was treated with considerable cruelty. His parents finally removed him when he was twelve and sent him to a private school, where his experience was far better. His views in later life were deeply affected by the English schoolboy code of honor and duty, especially when it involved loyalty to a group or team. At seventeen he rejoined his parents in India, where his father taught sculpture at the Bombay School of Art. By the time he returned to England seven years later, the poems and stories he had written while working as a newspaper reporter in India had brought him early fame. In 1892 he married an American woman, Caroline Starr Balestier; they lived in Brattleboro, Vermont, until a fierce quarrel with his brother-in-law drove him back to England in 1896; he settled on a country estate. Kipling seems to have been the first English author to own an automobile—an appropriate distinction, because he was intrigued by all kinds of machinery and feats of engineering. In this, as in many tastes, he differed markedly from his contemporaries in the 1890s, the aesthetes. Kipling was also the first English author to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature (1907).

During his seven years in India in the 1880s, Kipling gained a rich experience of colonial life, which he presented in his stories and poems. His first volume of stories, *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888), explores some of the psychological and moral problems of the Anglo Indians and their relationship with the people they had colonized. In his two volumes of the *Jungle Book* (1894, 1895) he draws on the Indian scene to create a world of jungle animals. At times, Kipling demonstrates his interest in Indian culture, as in his complex novel *Kim* (1901), where he describes the contemplative life of the Indian *lama*, or monk, with great sympathy. Kipling is also unusual among proponents of empire for his willingness to admit some of its costs: the British are often described as selfish and ignorant adventurers. At the same time, his conviction of the desirability of imperial aggression, and the superiority of British technology, political structures, and culture is largely unshakeable. Thus, even the *lama* in *Kim* is made to seem dependent on the protection and superior knowledge of the British imperialists.

In his poems Kipling also draws on the Indian scene, most commonly as it is viewed through the eyes of the men sent out from England to garrison the country and fight off invaders on the northwest frontiers. They rarely seem to question the imperial mission, but these poems about ordinary British soldiers in India also contain little by way of flag-waving celebrations. The soldier who speaks in "The Widow at Windsor" (1892) is simply bewildered by the events in which he has taken part. Kipling develops a new subject in the working-class imperial soldier (a subject, we should note, who frequently gives voice to deeply racist attitudes), and thus a new way to portray modern social experience.

The common man's perspective, expressed in the accent of the native-born Londoner or "Cockney," was one of the qualities that gained Kipling an immediate audience for his *Barrack-Room Ballads* (1890, 1892). The other was his mastery of swinging verse rhythms. Like Tennyson, Kipling knew how to make poems that call to be set to music, verses such as "Mandalay" (1890) or "Gentlemen-Rankers" (1892), with its memorable refrain: "We're poor little lambs who've

lost our way, / Baa! Baa! Baa!" Much of Kipling's poetry is best appreciated with the melodies and ambience of the music hall in mind.

In recent years Kipling's stories have received more attention than his poems. By portraying the British community in India and its relationship with the people it ruled, Kipling created a rich and various fictional world that reflects on England's imperialism as lived by the officers of the empire in all their peculiar social relationships. "The Man Who Would Be King" (1888) presents an intriguing approach to the topic. The narrator, a newspaper editor, tells us of his dealings with a couple of "Loafers." Peachey Carnehan and Daniel Dravot have no official positions in India but are quick to exploit any opportunities their European status may afford them; this pair of rogues heads out to the mountainous region of Kafiristan, intent on establishing their own dynasty. An action-packed tale of adventure in faraway places, the story also invites us to think critically about the general project of empire—about the assumptions it holds, the methods it employs, and the human cost of its endeavors—even if it stops short of outright condemnation.

After leaving India, Kipling gradually turned to English subjects in his fiction, but the cataclysm of World War I did much to diminish his output. As chair of the Imperial War Graves Commission, he played a difficult and important public role, responsible for (among other things) choosing the words to be inscribed on countless monuments and memorials across the globe. Kipling's task was all the more poignant because the body of his only son, who had died in the battle of Loos (1915), was never found. A deeply melancholy autobiography, *Something of Myself*, was published in 1937, the year after Kipling's death.

The Man Who Would Be King[1]

"Brother to a Prince and fellow to a beggar if he be found worthy."[2]

The law, as quoted, lays down a fair conduct of life, and one not easy to follow. I have been fellow to a beggar again and again under circumstances which prevented either of us finding out whether the other was worthy. I have still to be brother to a Prince, though I once came near to kinship with what might have been a veritable King and was promised the reversion of[3] a Kingdom—army, law-courts, revenue and policy all complete. But, to-day, I greatly fear that my King is dead, and if I want a crown I must go and hunt it for myself.

The beginning of everything was in a railway train upon the road to Mhow from Ajmir.[4] There had been a Deficit in the Budget, which necessitated traveling, not Second-class, which is only half as dear as First-class, but by Intermediate, which is very awful indeed. There are no cushions in the Intermediate class, and the population are either Intermediate, which is Eurasian, or native, which for a long night journey is nasty, or Loafer,[5] which is amusing though intoxicated. Intermediates do not patronize refreshment-rooms. They carry their food in bundles and pots, and buy sweets from the native sweetmeat-sellers, and drink the roadside water. That is why in the hot weather Intermediates are taken out of the carriages dead, and in all weathers are most properly looked down upon.

My particular Intermediate happened to be empty till I reached Nasirabad, when a huge gentleman in shirt-sleeves entered, and, following the custom of Intermediates, passed the time of day. He was a wanderer and a vagabond like myself, but with an educated taste for whiskey. He told tales of things he had seen and done, of out-of-the-way corners of the Empire into which he had penetrated,

and of adventures in which he risked his life for a few days' food. "If India was filled with men like you and me, not knowing more than the crows where they'd get their next day's rations, it isn't seventy millions of revenue the land would be paying—it's seven hundred millions," said he; and as I looked at his mouth and chin I was disposed to agree with him. We talked politics—the politics of Loaferdom that sees things from the underside where the lath and plaster is not smoothed off[6]—and we talked postal arrangements because my friend wanted to send a telegram back from the next station to Ajmir, which is the turning-off place from the Bombay to the Mhow line as you travel westward. My friend had no money beyond eight annas which he wanted[7] for dinner, and I had no money at all, owing to the hitch in the Budget before mentioned. Further, I was going into a wilderness where, though I should resume touch with the Treasury, there were no telegraph offices. I was, therefore, unable to help him in any way.

"We might threaten a Station-master, and make him send a wire on tick,"[8] said my friend, "but that'd mean inquiries for you and for me, and I've got my hands full these days. Did you say you are traveling back along this line within any days?"

"Within ten," I said.

"Can't you make it eight?" said he. "Mine is rather urgent business."

"I can send your telegram within ten days if that will serve you," I said.

"I couldn't trust the wire to fetch him now I think of it. It's this way. He leaves Delhi on the 23d for Bombay. That means he'll be running through Ajmir about the night of the 23d."

"But I'm going into the Indian Desert," I explained.

"Well *and* good," said he. "You'll be changing at Marwar Junction to get into Jodhpore territory—you must do that—and he'll be coming through Marwar Junction in the early morning of the 24th by the Bombay Mail. Can you be at Marwar Junction on that time? 'Twon't be inconveniencing you because I know that there's precious

few pickings to be got out of these Central India States—even though you pretend to be correspondent of the *Backwoodsman*."[9]

"Have you ever tried that trick?" I asked.

"Again and again, but the Residents[1] find you out, and then you get escorted to the Border before you've time to get your knife into them. But about my friend here. I *must* give him a word o' mouth to tell him what's come to me or else he won't know where to go. I would take it more than kind of you if you was to come out of Central India in time to catch him at Marwar Junction, and say to him:—'He has gone South for the week.' He'll know what that means. He's a big man with a red beard, and a great swell[2] he is. You'll find him sleeping like a gentleman with all his luggage round him in a Second-class compartment. But don't you be afraid. Slip down the window, and say:—'He has gone South for the week,' and he'll tumble.[3] It's only cutting your time of stay in those parts by two days. I ask you as a stranger—going to the West,"[4] he said, with emphasis.

"Where have *you* come from?" said I.

"From the East," said he, "and I am hoping that you will give him the message on the Square[5]—for the sake of my Mother as well as your own."

Englishmen are not usually softened by appeals to the memory of their mothers, but for certain reasons, which will be fully apparent, I saw fit to agree.

"It's more than a little matter," said he, "and that's why I ask you to do it—and now I know that I can depend on you doing it. A Second-class carriage at Marwar Junction, and a red-haired man asleep in it. You'll be sure to remember. I get out at the next station, and I must hold on there till he comes or sends me what I want."

"I'll give the message if I catch him," I said, "and for the sake of your Mother as well as mine I'll give you a word of advice. Don't try to run the Central India States just now as the correspondent of the *Backwoodsman.* There's a real one knocking about here, and it might lead to trouble."

"Thank you," said he, simply, "and when will the swine be gone? I can't starve because he's ruining my work. I wanted to get hold of the Degumber Rajah down here about his father's widow, and give him a jump."

"What did he do to his father's widow, then?"

"Filled her up with red pepper and slippered her to death as she hung from a beam. I found that out myself, and I'm the only man that would dare going into the State to get hush-money for it. They'll try to poison me, same as they did in Chortumna when I went on the loot there. But you'll give the man at Marwar Junction my message?"

He got out at a little roadside station, and I reflected. I had heard, more than once, of men personating correspondents of newspapers and bleeding small Native States with threats of exposure, but I had never met any of the caste before. They lead a hard life, and generally die with great suddenness. The Native States have a wholesome horror of English newspapers, which may throw light on their peculiar methods of government, and do their best to choke correspondents with champagne, or drive them out of their mind with four-in-hand barouches.[6] They do not understand that nobody cares a straw for the internal administration of Native States so long as oppression and crime are kept within decent limits, and the ruler is not drugged, drunk, or diseased from one end of the year to the other. Native States were created by Providence in order to supply picturesque scenery, tigers, and tall-writing.[7] They are the dark places of the earth, full of unimaginable cruelty, touching the Railway and the Telegraph on one side, and, on the other, the days of Harun-al-Raschid.[8] When I left the train I did business with divers Kings, and in eight days passed through many changes of life. Sometimes I wore dress-clothes and consorted with Princes and Politicals,[9] drinking from crystal and eating from silver. Sometimes I lay out upon the ground and devoured what I could get, from a plate made of a flapjack, and drank the running water, and slept under the same rug as my servant. It was all in the day's work.

Then I headed for the Great Indian Desert upon the proper date, as I had promised, and the night Mail set me down at Marwar Junction, where a funny little, happy-go-lucky, native-managed railway runs to Jodhpore. The Bombay Mail from Delhi makes a short halt at Marwar. She arrived as I got in, and I had just time to hurry to her platform and go down the carriages. There was only one Second-class on the train. I slipped the window, and looked down upon a flaming red beard, half covered by a railway rug. That was my man, fast asleep, and I dug him gently in the ribs. He woke with a grunt, and I saw his face in the light of the lamps. It was a great and shining face.

"Tickets again?" said he.

"No," said I. "I am to tell you that he is gone South for the week. He is gone South for the week!"

The train had begun to move out. The red man rubbed his eyes. "He has gone South for the week," he repeated. "Now that's just like his impidence. Did he say that I was to give you anything?—'Cause I won't."

"He didn't," I said, and dropped away, and watched the red lights die out in the dark. It was horribly cold, because the wind was blowing off the sands. I climbed into my own train—not an Intermediate Carriage this time—and went to sleep.

If the man with the beard had given me a rupee I should have kept it as a memento of a rather curious affair. But the consciousness of having done my duty was my only reward.

Later on I reflected that two gentlemen like my friends could not do any good if they foregathered and personated correspondents of newspapers, and might, if they "stuck up"[1] one of the little rat-trap states of Central India or Southern Rajputana, get themselves into serious difficulties. I therefore took some trouble to describe them as accurately as I could remember to people who would be interested in deporting them; and succeeded, so I was later informed, in having them headed back from Degumber borders.

Then I became respectable, and returned to an Office where there were no Kings and no incidents except the daily manufacture

of a newspaper. A newspaper office seems to attract every conceivable sort of person, to the prejudice of discipline. Zenana-mission ladies[2] arrive, and beg that the Editor will instantly abandon all his duties to describe a Christian prize-giving in a back-slum of a perfectly inaccessible village; Colonels who have been overpassed for commands sit down and sketch the outline of a series of ten, twelve, or twenty-four leading articles on Seniority *versus* Selection; missionaries wish to know why they have not been permitted to escape from their regular vehicles of abuse and swear at a brother missionary under special patronage of the editorial We; stranded theatrical companies troop up to explain that they cannot pay for their advertisements, but on their return from New Zealand or Tahiti will do so with interest; inventors of patent punkah[3]-pulling machines, carriage couplings and unbreakable swords and axle-trees call with specifications in their pockets and hours at their disposal; tea-companies enter and elaborate their prospectuses with the office pens; secretaries of ball-committees clamour to have the glories of their last dance more fully expounded; strange ladies rustle in and say:—"I want a hundred lady's cards printed *at once*, please," which is manifestly part of an Editor's duty; and every dissolute ruffian that ever tramped the Grand Trunk Road[4] makes it his business to ask for employment as a proof-reader. And, all the time, the telephone-bell is ringing madly, and Kings are being killed on the Continent, and Empires are saying—"You're another," and Mister Gladstone is calling down brimstone upon the British Dominions,[5] and the little black copy-boys are whining, *"kaapi chay-ha-yeh"* (copy wanted) like tired bees, and most of the paper is as blank as Modred's shield.[6]

But that is the amusing part of the year. There are other six months wherein none ever come to call, and the thermometer walks inch by inch up to the top of the glass, and the office is darkened to just above reading-light, and the press machines are red-hot of touch, and nobody writes anything but accounts of amusements in the Hill-stations[7] or obituary notices. Then the telephone becomes a tinkling terror, because it tells you of the sudden deaths of men and women that you knew intimately, and the prickly-heat covers you as

with a garment, and you sit down and write:—"A slight increase of sickness is reported from the Khuda Janta Khan[8] District. The outbreak is purely sporadic in its nature, and, thanks to the energetic efforts of the District authorities, is now almost at an end. It is, however, with deep regret we record the death, etc."

Then the sickness really breaks out, and the less recording and reporting the better for the peace of the subscribers. But the Empires and the Kings continue to divert themselves as selfishly as before, and the Foreman thinks that a daily paper really ought to come out once in twenty-four hours, and all the people at the Hill-stations in the middle of their amusements say:—"Good gracious! Why can't the paper be sparkling? I'm sure there's plenty going on up here."

That is the dark half of the moon, and, as the advertisements say, "must be experienced to be appreciated."

It was in that season, and a remarkably evil season, that the paper began running the last issue of the week on Saturday night, which is to say, Sunday morning, after the custom of a London paper. This was a great convenience, for immediately after the paper was put to bed,[9] the dawn would lower the thermometer from 96° to almost 84° for half an hour, and in that chill—you have no idea how cold is 84° on the grass until you begin to pray for it—a very tired man could set off to sleep ere the heat roused him.

One Saturday night it was my pleasant duty to put the paper to bed alone. A King or courtier or a courtesan or a community was going to die or get a new Constitution, or do something that was important on the other side of the world, and the paper was to be held open till the latest possible minute in order to catch the telegram. It was a pitchy black night, as stifling as a June night can be, and the *loo*, the red-hot wind from the westward, was booming among the tinder-dry trees and pretending that the rain was on its heels. Now and again a spot of almost boiling water would fall on the dust with the flop of a frog, but all our weary world knew that was only pretence. It was a shade cooler in the press-room than the office, so I sat there, while the type clicked and clicked and the

night-jars hooted at the windows, and the all but naked compositors wiped the sweat from their foreheads and called for water. The thing that was keeping us back, whatever it was, would not come off, though the *loo* dropped and the last type was set, and the whole round earth stood still in the choking heat, with its finger on its lip, to wait the event. I drowsed, and wondered whether the telegraph was a blessing, and whether this dying man, or struggling people, was aware of the inconvenience the delay was causing. There was no special reason beyond the heat and worry to make tension, but, as the clock hands crept up to three o'clock and the machines spun their fly-wheels two and three times to see that all was in order, before I said the word that would set them off, I could have shrieked aloud.

Then the roar and rattle of the wheels shivered the quiet into little bits. I rose to go away, but two men in white clothes stood in front of me. The first one said:—"It's him!" The second said:—"So it is!" And they both laughed almost as loudly as the machinery roared, and mopped their foreheads. "We see there was a light burning across the road and we were sleeping in that ditch there for coolness, and I said to my friend here, 'The office is open. Let's come along and speak to him as turned us back from the Degumber State,' " said the smaller of the two. He was the man I had met in the Mhow train, and his fellow was the red-bearded man of Marwar Junction. There was no mistaking the eyebrows of the one or the beard of the other.

I was not pleased, because I wished to go to sleep, not to squabble with loafers. "What do you want?" I asked.

"Half an hour's talk with you cool and comfortable, in the office," said the red-bearded man. "We'd *like* some drink—the Contrack doesn't begin yet, Peachey, so you needn't look—but what we really want is advice. We don't want money. We ask you as a favour, because you did us a bad turn about Degumber."

I led from the press-room to the stifling office with the maps on the walls, and the red-haired man rubbed his hands. "That's something like," said he. "This was the proper shop to come to. Now,

Sir, let me introduce to you Brother[1] Peachey Carnehan, that's him, and Brother Daniel Dravot, that is *me*, and the less said about our professions the better, for we have been most things in our time. Soldier, sailor, compositor, photographer, proof-reader, street-preacher, and correspondents of the *Backwoodsman* when we thought the paper wanted one. Carnehan is sober, and so am I. Look at us first and see that's sure. It will save you cutting into my talk. We'll take one of your cigars apiece, and you shall see us light."

I watched the test. The men were absolutely sober, so I gave them each a tepid peg.[2]

"Well *and* good," said Carnehan of the eyebrows, wiping the froth from his moustache. "Let me talk now, Dan. We have been all over India, mostly on foot. We have been boiler-fitters, engine-drivers, petty contractors, and all that, and we have decided that India isn't big enough for such as us."

They certainly were too big for the office. Dravot's beard seemed to fill half the room and Carnehan's shoulders the other half, as they sat on the big table. Carnehan continued: "The country isn't half worked out because they that governs it won't let you touch it. They spend all their blessed time in governing it, and you can't lift a spade, nor chip a rock, nor look for oil, nor anything like that without all the Government saying—'Leave it alone and let us govern.' Therefore, such as it is, we will let it alone, and go away to some other place where a man isn't crowded and can come to his own. We are not little men, and there is nothing that we are afraid of except Drink, and we have signed a Contrack on that. *Therefore*, we are going away to be Kings."

"Kings in our own right," muttered Dravot.

"Yes, of course," I said. "You've been tramping in the sun, and it's a very warm night, and hadn't you better sleep over the notion? Come to-morrow."

"Neither drunk nor sunstruck," said Dravot. "We have slept over the notion half a year, and require to see Books and Atlases, and we have decided that there is only one place now in the world that two strong men can Sar-a-*whack*.[3] They call it Kafiristan.[4] By my

reckoning it's the top right-hand corner of Afghanistan, not more than three hundred miles from Pesha-wur.[5] They have two and thirty heathen idols there, and we'll be the thirty-third. It's a mountainous country, and the women of those parts are very beautiful."

"But that is provided against in the Contrack," said Carnehan. "Neither Women nor Liquor, Daniel."

"And that's all we know, except that no one has gone there, and they fight, and in any place where they fight, a man who knows how to drill men can always be a King. We shall go to those parts and say to any King we find—'D'you want to vanquish your foes?' and we will show him how to drill men; for that we know better than anything else. Then we will subvert that King and seize his Throne and establish a Dy-nasty."

"You'll be cut to pieces before you're fifty miles across the Border," I said. "You have to travel through Afghanistan to get to that country. It's one mass of mountains and peaks and glaciers, and no Englishman has been through it. The people are utter brutes, and even if you reached them you couldn't do anything."

"That's more like," said Carnehan: "If you could think us a little more mad we would be more pleased. We have come to you to know about this country, to read a book about it, and to be shown maps. We want you to tell us that we are fools and to show us your books." He turned to the bookcases.

"Are you at all in earnest?" I said.

"A little," said Dravot, sweetly. "As big a map as you have got, even if it's all blank where Kafiristan is, and any books you've got. We can read, though we aren't very educated."

I uncased the big thirty-two-miles-to-the-inch map of India, and two smaller Frontier maps, hauled down volume INF-KAN of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and the men consulted them.

"See here!" said Dravot, his thumb on the map. "Up to Jagdallak, Peachey and me know the road. We was there with Roberts's Army.[6] We'll have to turn off to the right at Jagdallak through Laghmann territory. Then we get among the hills—fourteen thousand feet—

fifteen thousand—it will be cold work there, but it don't look very far on the map."

I handed him Wood on the *Sources of the Oxus.*[7] Carnehan was deep in the *Encyclopaedia.*

"They're a mixed lot," said Dravot, reflectively; "and it won't help us to know the names of their tribes. The more tribes the more they'll fight, and the better for us. From Jagdallak to Ashang. H'mm!"

"But all the information about the country is as sketchy and inaccurate as can be," I protested. "No one knows anything about it really. Here's the file of the *United Services' Institute.* Read what Bellew says."

"Blow Bellew!" said Carnehan. "Dan, they're an all-fired lot of heathens, but this book here says they think they're related to us English."

I smoked while the men pored over Raverty, Wood, the maps, and the *Encyclopaedia.*

"There is no use your waiting," said Dravot, politely. "It's about four o'clock now. We'll go before six o'clock if you want to sleep, and we won't steal any of the papers. Don't you sit up. We're two harmless lunatics and if you come, to-morrow evening, down to the Serai[8] we'll say good-bye to you."

"You *are* two fools," I answered. "You'll be turned back at the Frontier or cut up the minute you set foot in Afghanistan. Do you want any money or a recommendation downcountry? I can help you to the chance of work next week."

"Next week we shall be hard at work ourselves, thank you," said Dravot. "It isn't so easy being a King as it looks. When we've got our Kingdom in going order we'll let you know, and you can come up and help us to govern it."

"Would two lunatics make a Contrack like that?" said Carnehan, with subdued pride, showing me a greasy half-sheet of note-paper on which was written the following. I copied it, then and there, as a curiosity:

This Contract between me and you persuing witnesseth in the name of God—Amen and so forth.

(One) *That me and you will settle this matter together:* i.e., *to be Kings of Kafiristan.*

(Two) *That you and me will not, while this matter is being settled, look at any Liquor, nor any Woman, black, white or brown, so as to get mixed up with one or the other harmful.*

(Three) *That we conduct ourselves with dignity and discretion and if one of us gets into trouble the other will stay by him.*

Signed by you and me this day.
Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan.
Daniel Dravot.
Both Gentlemen at Large.

"There was no need for the last article," said Carnehan, blushing modestly; "but it looks regular. Now you know the sort of men that loafers are—we *are* loafers, Dan, until we get out of India—and *do* you think that we would sign a Contrack like that unless we was in earnest? We have kept away from the two things that make life worth having."

"You won't enjoy your lives much longer if you are going to try this idiotic adventure. Don't set the office on fire," I said, "and go away before nine o'clock."

I left them still poring over the maps and making notes on the back of the "Contrack." "Be sure to come down to the Serai to-morrow," were their parting words.

The Kumharsen Serai is the great foursquare sink of humanity where the strings of camels and horses from the North load and unload. All the nationalities of Central Asia may be found there, and most of the folk of India proper. Balkh and Bokhara there meet Bengal and Bombay, and try to draw eye-teeth. You can buy ponies, turquoises, Persian pussy-cats, saddle-bags, fat-tailed sheep and

musk in the Kumharsen Serai, and get many strange things for nothing. In the afternoon I went down there to see whether my friends intended to keep their word or were lying about drunk.

A priest attired in fragments of ribbons and rags stalked up to me, gravely twisting a child's paper whirligig.[9] Behind was his servant bending under the load of a crate of mud toys. The two were loading up two camels, and the inhabitants of the Serai watched them with shrieks of laughter.

"The priest is mad," said a horse-dealer to me. "He is going up to Kabul to sell toys to the Amir.[1] He will either be raised to honor or have his head cut off. He came in here this morning and has been behaving madly ever since."

"The witless are under the protection of God," stammered a flat-cheeked Usbeg[2] in broken Hindi. "They foretell future events."

"Would they could have foretold that my caravan would have been cut up by the Shinwaris almost within shadow of the Pass!"[3] grunted the Eusufzai agent of a Rajputana trading-house whose goods had been feloniously diverted into the hands of other robbers just across the Border, and whose misfortunes were the laughing-stock of the bazar. "Ohé, priest, whence come you and whither do you go?"

"From Roum[4] have I come," shouted the priest, waving his whirligig; "from Roum, blown by the breath of a hundred devils across the sea! O thieves, robbers, liars, the blessing of Pir Khan on pigs, dogs, and perjurers! Who will take the Protected of God to the North to sell charms that are never still to the Amir? The camels shall not gall,[5] the sons shall not fall sick, and the wives shall remain faithful while they are away, of the men who give me place in their caravan. Who will assist me to slipper the King of the Roos[6] with a golden slipper with a silver heel? The protection of Pir Khan be upon his labors!" He spread out the skirts of his gaberdine and pirouetted between the lines of tethered horses.

"There starts a caravan from Peshawur to Kabul in twenty days, *Huzrut*,"[7] said the Eusufzai trader. "My camels go therewith. Do thou

also go and bring us good-luck."

"I will go even now!" shouted the priest. "I will depart upon my winged camels, and be at Peshawur in a day! Ho! Hazar[8] Mir Khan," he yelled to his servant, "drive out the camels, but let me first mount my own."

He leaped on the back of his beast as it knelt, and, turning round to me, cried:—"Come thou also, Sahib, a little along the road, and I will sell thee a charm—an amulet that shall make thee King of Kafiristan."

Then the light broke upon me, and I followed the two camels out of the Serai till we reached open road and the priest halted.

"What d' you think o' that?" said he in English. "Carnehan can't talk their patter, so I've made him my servant. He makes a handsome servant. 'Tisn't for nothing that I've been knocking about the country for fourteen years. Didn't I do that talk neat? We'll hitch on to a caravan at Peshawur till we get to Jagdallak, and then we'll see if we can get donkeys for our camels, and strike into Kafiristan. Whirligigs for the Amir, O Lor! Put your hand under the camel-bags and tell me what you feel."

I felt the butt of a Martini,[9] and another and another.

"Twenty of 'em," said Dravot, placidly. "Twenty of 'em, and ammunition to correspond, under the whirligigs and the mud dolls."

"Heaven help you if you are caught with those things!" I said. "A Martini is worth her weight in silver among the Pathans."[1]

"Fifteen hundred rupees of capital—every rupee we could beg, borrow, or steal—are invested on these two camels," said Dravot. "We won't get caught. We're going through the Khaiber with a regular caravan. Who'd touch a poor mad priest?"

"Have you got everything you want?" I asked, overcome with astonishment.

"Not yet, but we shall soon. Give us a memento of your kindness, *Brother.* You did me a service yesterday, and that time in Marwar. Half my Kingdom shall you have, as the saying is." I slipped a small charm compass from my watch-chain and handed it up to the priest.

"Good-bye," said Dravot, giving me hand cautiously. "It's the last time we'll shake hands with an Englishman these many days. Shake hands with him, Carnehan," he cried, as the second camel passed me.

Carnehan leaned down and shook hands. Then the camels passed away along the dusty road, and I was left alone to wonder. My eye could detect no failure in the disguises. The scene in Serai attested that they were complete to the native mind. There was just the chance, therefore, that Carnehan and Dravot would be able to wander through Afghanistan without detection. But, beyond, they would find death, certain and awful death.

Ten days later a native friend of mine, giving me the news of the day from Peshawur, wound up his letter with:—"There has been much laughter here on account of a certain mad priest who is going in his estimation to sell petty gauds and insignificant trinkets which he ascribes as great charms to H. H.[2] the Amir of Bokhara. He passed through Peshawur and associated himself to the Second Summer caravan that goes to Kabul. The merchants are pleased, because through superstition they imagine that such mad fellows bring good-fortune."

The two, then, were beyond the Border. I would have prayed for them, but, that night, a real King died in Europe, and demanded an obituary notice.

The wheel of the world swings through the same phases again and again. Summer passed and winter thereafter, and came and passed again. The daily paper continued and I with it, and upon the third summer there fell a hot night, a night-issue, and a strained waiting for something to be telegraphed from the other side of the world, exactly as had happened before. A few great men had died in the past two years, the machines worked with more clatter, and some of the trees in the Office garden were a few feet taller. But that was all the difference.

I passed over to the press-room, and went through just such a scene as I have already described. The nervous tension was stronger

than it had been two years before, and I felt the heat more acutely. At three o'clock I cried, "Print off," and turned to go, when there crept to my chair what was left of a man. He was bent into a circle, his head was sunk between his shoulders, and he moved his feet one over the other like a bear. I could hardly see whether he walked or crawled—this rag-wrapped, whining cripple who addressed me by name, crying that he was come back. "Can you give me a drink?" he whimpered. "For the Lord's sake, give me a drink!"

I went back to the office, the man following with groans of pain, and I turned up the lamp.

"Don't you know me?" he gasped, dropping into a chair, and he turned his drawn face, surmounted by a shock of grey hair, to the light.

I looked at him intently. Once before had I seen eyebrows that met over the nose in an inch-broad black band, but for the life of me I could not tell where.

"I don't know you," I said, handing him the whiskey. "What can I do for you?"

He took a gulp of the spirit raw, and shivered in spite of the suffocating heat.

"I've come back," he repeated; "and I was the King of Kafiristan—me and Dravot—crowned Kings we was! In this office we settled it—you setting there and giving us the books. I am Peachey—Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan, and you've been setting here ever since—O Lord!"

I was more than a little astonished, and expressed my feelings accordingly.

"It's true," said Carnehan, with a dry cackle, nursing his feet, which were wrapped in rags. "True as gospel. Kings we were, with crowns upon our heads—me and Dravot—poor Dan—oh, poor, poor Dan, that would never take advice, not though I begged of him!"

"Take the whiskey," I said, "and take your own time. Tell me all you can recollect of everything from beginning to end. You got across the border on your camels, Dravot dressed as a mad priest and you his servant. Do you remember that?"

"I ain't mad—yet, but I shall be that way soon. Of course I remember. Keep looking at me, or maybe my words will go all to pieces. Keep looking at me in my eyes and don't say anything."

I leaned forward and looked into his face as steadily as I could. He dropped one hand upon the table and I grasped it by the wrist. It was twisted like a bird's claw, and upon the back was a ragged, red, diamond-shaped scar.

"No, don't look there. Look at *me*," said Carnehan.

"That comes afterward, but for the Lord's sake don't distrack me. We left with that caravan, me and Dravot playing all sorts of antics to amuse the people we were with. Dravot used to make us laugh in the evenings when all the people was cooking their dinners—cooking their dinners, and . . . what did they do then? They lit little fires with sparks that went into Dravot's beard, and we all laughed—fit to die. Little red fires they was, going into Dravot's big red beard—so funny." His eyes left mine and he smiled foolishly.

"You went as far as Jagdallak with that caravan," I said, at a venture, "after you had lit those fires. To Jagdallak, where you turned off to try to get into Kafiristan."

"No, we didn't neither. What are you talking about? We turned off before Jagdallak, because we heard the roads was good. But they wasn't good enough for our two camels—mine and Dravot's. When we left the caravan, Dravot took off all his clothes and mine too, and said we would be heathen, because the Kafirs[3] didn't allow Mohammedans to talk to them. So we dressed betwixt and between, and such a sight as Daniel Dravot I never saw yet nor expect to see again. He burned half his beard, and slung a sheep-skin over his shoulder, and shaved his head into patterns. He shaved mine, too, and made me wear outrageous things to look like a heathen. That was in a most mountaineous country, and our camels couldn't go along any more because of the mountains. They were tall and black, and coming home I saw them fight like wild goats—there are lots of goats in Kafiristan. And these mountains, they never keep still, no more than goats. Always fighting they are, and don't let you sleep at night."

"Take some more whiskey," I said, very slowly. "What did you and Daniel Dravot do when the camels could go no further because of the rough roads that led into Kafiristan?"

"What did which do? There was a party called Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan that was with Dravot. Shall I tell you about him? He died out there in the cold. Slap from the bridge fell old Peachey, turning and twisting in the air like a penny whirligig that you can sell to the Amir—No; they was two for three ha'pence, those whirligigs, or I am much mistaken and woful sore. And then these camels were no use, and Peachey said to Dravot—'For the Lord's sake, let's get out of this before our heads are chopped off,' and with that they killed the camels all among the mountains, not having anything in particular to eat, but first they took off the boxes with the guns and the ammunition, till two men came along driving four mules. Dravot up and dances in front of them, singing,—'Sell me four mules.' Says the first man,—'If you are rich enough to buy, you are rich enough to rob;' but before ever he could put his hand to his knife, Dravot breaks his neck over his knee, and the other party runs away. So Carnehan loaded the mules with the rifles that was taken off the camels, and together we starts forward into those bitter cold mountaineous parts, and never a road broader than the back of your hand."

He paused for a moment, while I asked him if he could remember the nature of the country through which he had journeyed.

"I am telling you as straight as I can, but my head isn't as good as it might be. They drove nails through it to make me hear better how Dravot died. The country was mountaineous and the mules were most contrary, and the inhabitants was dispersed and solitary. They went up and up, and down and down, and that other party, Carnehan, was imploring of Dravot not to sing and whistle so loud, for fear of bringing down the tremenjus avalanches. But Dravot says that if a King couldn't sing it wasn't worth being King, and whacked the mules over the rump, and never took no heed for ten cold days. We came to a big level valley all among the mountains, and the

mules were near dead, so we killed them, not having anything in special for them or us to eat. We sat upon the boxes, and played odd and even[4] with the cartridges that was jolted out.

"Then ten men with bows and arrows ran down that valley, chasing twenty men with bows and arrows, and the row was tremenjus. They was fair men—fairer than you or me—with yellow hair and remarkable well built.[5] Says Dravot, unpacking the guns —'This is the beginning of the business. We'll fight for the ten men,' and with that he fires two rifles at the twenty men, and drops one of them at two hundred yards from the rock where we was sitting. The other men began to run, but Carnehan and Dravot sits on the boxes picking them off at all ranges, up and down the valley. Then we goes up to the ten men that had run across the snow too, and they fires a footy[6] little arrow at us. Dravot he shoots above their heads and they all falls down flat. Then he walks over and kicks them, and then he lifts them up and shakes hands all round to make them friendly like. He calls them and gives them the boxes to carry, and waves his hand for all the world as though he was King already. They takes the boxes and him across the valley and up the hill into a pine wood on the top, where there was half a dozen big stone idols. Dravot he goes to the biggest—a fellow they call Imbra—and lays a rifle and a cartridge at his feet, rubbing his nose respectful with his own nose, patting him on the head, and saluting in front of it. He turns round to the men and nods his head, and says,—'That's all right. I'm in the know too, and all these old jim-jams[7] are my friends.' Then he opens his mouth and points down it, and when the first man brings him food, he says—'No;' and when the second man brings him food, he says—'No;' but when one of the old priests and the boss of the village brings him food, he says—'Yes;' very haughty, and eats it slow. That was how we came to our first village, without any trouble, just as though we had tumbled from the skies. But we tumbled from one of those damned rope-bridges, you see, and you couldn't expect a man to laugh much after that."

"Take some more whiskey and go on," I said. "That was the first village you came into. How did you get to be King?"

"I wasn't King," said Carnehan. "Dravot he was the King, and a handsome man he looked with the gold crown on his head and all. Him and the other party stayed in that village, and every morning Dravot sat by the side of old Imbra, and the people came and worshipped. That was Dravot's order. Then a lot of men came into the valley, and Carnehan and Dravot picks them off with the rifles before they knew where they was, and runs down into the valley and up again the other side, and finds another village, same as the first one, and the people all falls down flat on their faces, and Dravot says,—'Now what is the trouble between you two villages?' and the people points to a woman, as fair as you or me, that was carried off, and Dravot takes her back to the first village and counts up the dead —eight there was. For each dead man Dravot pours a little milk on the ground and waves his arms like a whirligig and 'That's all right,' says he. Then he and Carnehan takes the big boss of each village by the arm and walks them down into the valley, and shows them how to scratch a line with a spear right down the valley, and gives each a sod of turf from both sides o' the line. Then all the people comes down and shouts like the devil and all, and Dravot says,—'Go and dig the land, and be fruitful and multiply,'[8] which they did, though they didn't understand. Then we asks the names of things in their lingo—bread and water and fire and idols and such, and Dravot leads the priest of each village up to the idol, and says he must sit there and judge the people, and if anything goes wrong he is to be shot.

"Next week they was all turning up the land in the valley as quiet as bees and much prettier, and the priests heard all the complaints and told Dravot in dumb show what it was about. 'That's just the beginning,' says Dravot. 'They think we're Gods.' He and Carnehan picks out twenty good men and shows them how to click off a rifle, and form fours, and advance in line, and they was very pleased to do so, and clever to see the hang of it. Then he takes out his pipe and his baccy-pouch and leaves one at one village and one at the other, and off we two goes to see what was to be done in the next valley. That was all rock, and there was a little village there, and

Carnehan says,—'Send 'em to the old valley to plant,' and takes 'em there and gives 'em some land that wasn't took before. They were a poor lot, and we blooded 'em with a kid[9] before letting 'em into the new Kingdom. That was to impress the people, and then they settled down quiet, and Carnehan went back to Dravot, who had got into another valley, all snow and ice and most mountaineous. There was no people there, and the Army got afraid, so Dravot shoots one of them, and goes on till he finds some people in a village, and the Army explains that unless the people wants to be killed they had better not shoot their little matchlocks;[1] for they had matchlocks. We makes friends with the priest and I stays there alone with two of the Army, teaching the men how to drill, and a thundering big Chief comes across the snow with kettle-drums and horns twanging, because he heard there was a new God kicking about. Carnehan sights for the brown[2] of the men half a mile across the snow and wings one of them. Then he sends a message to the Chief that, unless he wished to be killed, he must come and shake hands with me and leave his arms behind. The Chief comes alone first, and Carnehan shakes hands with him and whirls his arms about, same as Dravot used, and very much surprised that Chief was, and strokes my eyebrows. Then Carnehan goes alone to the Chief, and asks him in dumb show if he had an enemy he hated. 'I have,' says the Chief. So Carnehan weeds out the pick of his men, and sets the two of the Army to show them drill, and at the end of two weeks the men can manoeuvre about as well as Volunteers. So he marches with the Chief to a great big plain on the top of a mountain, and the Chief's men rushes into a village and takes it; we three Martinis firing into the brown of the enemy. So we took that village too, and I gives the Chief a rag from my coat and says, 'Occupy till I come;'[3] which was scriptural. By way of a reminder, when me and the Army was eighteen hundred yards away, I drops a bullet near him standing on the snow, and all the people falls flat on their faces. Then I sends a letter to Dravot, wherever he be by land or by sea."

At the risk of throwing the creature out of train I interrupted, —"How could you write a letter up yonder?"

"The letter?—Oh!—The letter! Keep looking at me between the eyes, please. It was a string-talk letter, that we'd learned the way of it from a blind beggar in the Punjab."

I remember that there had once come to the office a blind man with a knotted twig and a piece of string which he wound round the twig according to some cipher of his own. He could, after the lapse of days or hours, repeat the sentence which he had reeled up. He had reduced the alphabet to eleven primitive sounds; and tried to teach me his method, but failed.

"I sent that letter to Dravot," said Carnehan; "and told him to come back because this Kingdom was growing too big for me to handle, and then I struck for the first valley, to see how the priests were working. They called the village we took along with the Chief, Bashkai, and the first village we took, Er-Heb. The priests at Er-Heb was doing all right, but they had a lot of pending cases about land to show me, and some men from another village had been firing arrows at night. I went out and looked for that village and fired four rounds at it from a thousand yards. That used all the cartridges I cared to spend, and I waited for Dravot, who had been away two or three months, and I kept my people quiet.

"One morning I heard the devil's own noise of drums and horns, and Dan Dravot marches down the hill with his Army and a tail of hundreds of men, and, which was the most amazing—a great gold crown on his head. 'My Gord, Carnehan,' says Daniel, 'this is a tremenjus business, and we've got the whole country as far as it's worth having. I am the son of Alexander by Queen Semiramis,[4] and you're my younger brother and a God too! It's the biggest thing we've ever seen. I've been marching and fighting for six weeks with the Army, and every footy[5] little village for fifty miles has come in rejoiceful; and more than that, I've got the key of the whole show, as you'll see, and I've got a crown for you! I told 'em to make two of 'em at a place called Shu, where the gold lies in the rock like suet in mutton. Gold I've seen, and turquoise I've kicked out of the cliffs, and there's garnets in the sands of the river, and here's a chunk of

amber that a man brought me. Call up all the priests and, here, take your crown.'

"One of the men opens a black hair bag and I slips the crown on. It was too small and too heavy, but I wore it for the glory. Hammered gold it was—five pound weight, like a hoop of a barrel.

" 'Peachey,' says Dravot, 'we don't want to fight no more. The Craft's[6] the trick, so help me!' and he brings forward that same Chief that I left at Bashkai—Billy Fish we called him afterward, because he was so like Billy Fish that drove the big tank-engine at Mach on the Bolan[7] in the old days. 'Shake hands with him,' says Dravot, and I shook hands and nearly dropped, for Billy Fish gave me the Grip.[8] I said nothing, but tried him with the Fellow Craft Grip. He answers, all right, and I tried the Master's Grip, but that was a slip. 'A Fellow Craft he is!' I says to Dan. 'Does he know the word?' 'He does,' says Dan, 'and all the priests know. It's a miracle! The Chiefs and the priests can work a Fellow Craft Lodge in a way that's very like ours, and they've cut the marks on the rocks, but they don't know the Third Degree, and they've come to find out. It's Gord's Truth. I've known these long years that the Afghans knew up to the Fellow Craft Degree, but this is a miracle. A God and a Grand-Master of the Craft am I, and a Lodge in the Third Degree I will open, and we'll raise the head priests and the Chiefs of the villages.'

" 'It's against all the law,' I says, 'holding a Lodge without warrant from any one; and we never held office in any Lodge.'

" 'It's a master-stroke of policy,' says Dravot. 'It means running the country as easy as a four-wheeled bogy[9] on a down grade. We can't stop to inquire now, or they'll turn against us. I've forty Chiefs at my heel, and passed and raised according to their merit they shall be. Billet these men on the villages and see that we run up a Lodge of some kind. The temple of Imbra will do for the Lodge-room. The women must make aprons as you show them. I'll hold a levee[1] of Chiefs to-night and Lodge to-morrow.'

"I was fair run off my legs, but I wasn't such a fool as not to see what a pull this Craft business gave us. I showed the priests' families how to make aprons of the degrees, but for Dravot's apron the blue

border and marks was made of turquoise lumps on white hide, not cloth. We took a great square stone in the temple for the Master's chair, and little stones for the officers' chairs, and painted the black pavement with white squares, and did what we could to make things regular.

"At the levee which was held that night on the hillside with big bonfires, Dravot gives out that him and me were Gods and sons of Alexander, and Past Grand-Masters in the Craft, and was come to make Kafiristan a country where every man should eat in peace and drink in quiet, and specially obey us. Then the Chiefs come round to shake hands, and they was so hairy and white and fair it was just shaking hands with old friends. We gave them names according as they was like men we had known in India—Billy Fish, Holly Wilworth, Pikky Kergan that was Bazar-master when I was at Mhow, and so on and so on.

"*The* most amazing miracle was at Lodge next night. One of the old priests was watching us continuous, and I felt uneasy, for I knew we'd have to fudge the Ritual, and I didn't know what the men knew. The old priest was a stranger come in from beyond the village of Bashkai. The minute Dravot puts on the Master's apron that the girls had made for him, the priest fetches a whoop and a howl, and tries to overturn the stone that Dravot was sitting on. 'It's all up now,' I says. 'That comes of meddling with the Craft without warrant!' Dravot never winked an eye, not when ten priests took and tilted over the Grand-Master's chair—which was to say the stone of Imbra. The priest begins rubbing the bottom end of it to clear away the black dirt, and presently he shows all the other priests the Master's Mark, same as was on Dravot's apron, cut into the stone. Not even the priests of the temple of Imbra knew it was there. The old chap falls flat on his face at Dravot's feet and kisses 'em. 'Luck again,' says Dravot, across the Lodge to me, 'they say it's the missing Mark that no one could understand the why of. We're more than safe now.' Then he bangs the butt of his gun for a gavel and says:—'By virtue of the authority vested in me by my own right hand and the help of Peachey, I declare myself Grand-Master of all

Freemasonry in Kafiristan in this the Mother Lodge o' the country, and King of Kafiristan equally with Peachey!' At that he puts on his crown and I puts on mine—I was doing Senior Warden—and we opens the Lodge in most ample form. It was a amazing miracle! The priests moved in Lodge through the first two degrees almost without telling, as if the memory was coming back to them. After that, Peachey and Dravot raised such as was worthy—high priests and Chiefs of far-off villages. Billy Fish was the first, and I can tell you we scared the soul out of him. It was not in any way according to Ritual, but it served our turn. We didn't raise more than ten of the biggest men, because we didn't want to make the Degree common. And they was clamoring to be raised.

" 'In another six months,' says Dravot, 'we'll hold another Communication[2] and see how you are working.' Then he asks them about their villages, and learns that they was fighting one against the other and were fair sick and tired of it. And when they wasn't doing that they was fighting with the Mohammedans. 'You can fight those when they come into our country,' says Dravot. 'Tell off[3] every tenth man of your tribes for a Frontier guard, and send two hundred at a time to this valley to be drilled. Nobody is going to be shot or speared any more so long as he does well, and I know that you won't cheat me because you're white people—sons of Alexander—and not like common, black Mohammedans. You are *my* people and by God,' says he, running off into English at the end—'I'll make a damned fine Nation of you, or I'll die in the making!'

"I can't tell all we did for the next six months because Dravot did a lot I couldn't see the hang off, and he learned their lingo in a way I never could. My work was to help the people plough, and now and again go out with some of the Army and see what the other villages were doing, and make 'em throw rope-bridges across the ravines which cut up the country horrid. Dravot was very kind to me, but when he walked up and down in the pine wood pulling that bloody red beard of his with both fists I knew he was thinking plans I could not advise him about, and I just waited for orders.

"But Dravot never showed me disrespect before the people. They were afraid of me and the Army, but they loved Dan. He was the best of friends with the priests and the Chiefs; but any one could come across the hills with a complaint and Dravot would hear him out fair, and call four priests together and say what was to be done. He used to call in Billy Fish from Bashkai, and Pikky Kergan from Shu, and an old Chief we called Kafuzelum—it was like enough to his real name—and hold councils with 'em when there was any fighting to be done in small villages. That was his Council of War, and the four priests of Bashkai, Shu, Khawak, and Madora was his Privy Council. Between the lot of 'em they sent me, with forty men and twenty rifles, and sixty men carrying turquoises, into the Ghorband country to buy those hand-made Martini rifles, that come out of the Amir's workshops at Kabul, from one of the Amir's Herati regiments that would have sold the very teeth out of their mouths for turquoises.

"I stayed in Ghorband a month, and gave the Governor there the pick of my baskets for hush-money, and bribed the Colonel of the regiment some more, and, between the two and the tribes-people, we got more than a hundred handmade Martinis, a hundred good Kohat Jezails[4] that'll throw to six hundred yards, and forty man-loads of very bad ammunition for the rifles. I came back with what I had, and distributed 'em among the men that the Chiefs sent to me to drill. Dravot was too busy to attend to those things, but the old Army that we first made helped me, and we turned out five hundred men that could drill, and two hundred that knew how to hold arms pretty straight. Even those cork-screwed, hand-made guns was a miracle to them. Dravot talked big about powder-shops and factories, walking up and down in the pine wood when the winter was coming on.

" 'I won't make a Nation,' says he. 'I'll make an Empire! These men aren't n*****s; they're English! Look at their eyes—look at their mouths. Look at the way they stand up. They sit, on chairs in their own houses. They're the Lost Tribes,[5] or something like it, and they've grown to be English. I'll take a census in the spring if the priests don't get frightened. There must be a fair two million of 'em

in these hills. The villages are full o' little children. Two million people —two hundred and fifty thousand fighting men—and all English! They only want the rifles and a little drilling. Two hundred and fifty thousand men, ready to cut in on Russia's right flank when she tries for India! Peachey, man,' he says, chewing his beard in great hunks, 'we shall be Emperors—Emperors of the Earth! Rajah Brooke will be a suckling[6] to us. I'll treat with the Viceroy[7] on equal terms. I'll ask him to send me twelve picked English—twelve that I know of—to help us govern a bit. There's Mackray, Sergeant-pensioner at Segowli —many's the good dinner he's given me, and his wife a pair of trousers. There's Donldn, the Warder of Tounghoo Jail; there's hundreds that I could lay my hand on if I was in India. The Viceroy shall do it for me. I'll send a man through in the spring for those men, and I'll write for a dispensation from the Grand-Lodge for what I've done as Grand-Master. That—and all the Sniders[8] that'll be thrown out when the native troops in India take up the Martini. They'll be worn smooth, but they'll do for fighting in these hills. Twelve English, a hundred thousand Sniders run through the Amir's country in driblets—I'd be content with twenty thousand in one year —and we'd be an Empire. When everything was shipshape, I'd hand over the crown—this crown I'm wearing now—to Queen Victoria on my knees, and she'd say: "Rise up, Sir Daniel Dravot." Oh, it's big! It's big, I tell you! But there's so much to be done in every place— Bashkai, Khawak, Shu, and everywhere else.'

" 'What is it?' I says. 'There are no more men coming in to be drilled this autumn. Look at those fat, black clouds. They're bringing the snow.'

" 'It isn't that,' says Daniel, putting his hand very hard on my shoulder; 'and I don't wish to say anything that's against you, for no other living man would have followed me and made me what I am as you have done. You're a first-class Commander-in-Chief, and the people know you; but—it's a big country, and somehow you can't help me, Peachey, in the way I want to be helped.'

" 'Go to your blasted priests, then!' I said, and I was sorry when I made that remark, but it did hurt me sore to find Daniel talking so

superior when I'd drilled all the men, and done all he told me.

" 'Don't let's quarrel, Peachey,' says Daniel, without cursing. 'You're a King, too, and the half of this Kingdom is yours; but can't you see, Peachey, we want cleverer men than us now—three or four of 'em, that we can scatter about for our Deputies. It's a hugeous great State, and I can't always tell the right thing to do, and I haven't time for all I want to do, and here's the winter coming on and all.' He put half his beard into his mouth, and it was as red as the gold of his crown.

" 'I'm sorry, Daniel,' says I. 'I've done all I could. I've drilled the men and shown the people how to stack their oats better; and I've brought in those tinware rifles from Ghorband—but I know what you're driving at. I take it Kings always feel oppressed that way.'

" 'There's another thing too,' says Dravot, walking up and down. 'The winter's coming and these people won't be giving much trouble and if they do we can't move about. I want a wife.'

" 'For Gord's sake leave the women alone!' I says. 'We've both got all the work we can, though I *am* a fool. Remember the Contrack, and keep clear o' women.'

" 'The Contrack only lasted till such time as we was Kings; and Kings we have been these months past,' says Dravot, weighing his crown in his hand. 'You go get a wife too, Peachey—a nice, strappin', plump girl that'll keep you warm in the winter. They're prettier than English girls, and we can take the pick of 'em. Boil 'em once or twice in hot water, and they'll come as fair as chicken and ham.'

" 'Don't tempt me!' I says. 'I will not have any dealings with a woman not till we are a dam' side more settled than we are now. I've been doing the work o' two men, and you've been doing the work o' three. Let's lie off a bit, and see if we can get some better tobacco from Afghan country and run in some good liquor; but no women.'

" 'Who's talking o' *women?*' says Dravot. 'I said *wife*—a Queen to breed a King's son for the King. A Queen out of the strongest tribe, that'll make them your blood-brothers, and that'll lie by your side

and tell you all the people thinks about you and their own affairs. That's what I want.'

" 'Do you remember that Bengali woman I kept at Mogul Serai when I was a plate-layer?'[9] says I. 'A fat lot o' good she was to me. She taught me the lingo and one or two other things; but what happened? She ran away with the Station-master's servant and half my month's pay. Then she turned up at Dadur Junction in tow of a half-caste, and had the impidence to say I was her husband—all among the drivers in the running-shed!'

" 'We've done with that,' says Dravot. 'These women are whiter than you or me, and a Queen I will have for the winter months.'

" 'For the last time o' asking, Dan, do *not*,' I says. 'It'll only bring us harm. The Bible says that Kings ain't to waste their strength on women,[1] 'specially when they've got a new raw Kingdom to work over.'

" 'For the last time of answering, I will,' said Dravot, and he went away through the pine-trees looking like a big red devil. The low sun hit his crown and beard on one side and the two blazed like hot coals.

"But getting a wife was not as easy as Dan thought. He put it before the Council, and there was no answer till Billy Fish said that he'd better ask the girls. Dravot damned them all round. 'What's wrong with me?' he shouts, standing by the idol Imbra. 'Am I a dog or am I not enough of a man for your wenches? Haven't I put the shadow of my hand over this country? Who stopped the last Afghan raid?' It was me really, but Dravot was too angry to remember. 'Who brought your guns? Who repaired the bridges? Who's the Grand-Master of the sign cut in the stone?' and he thumped his hand on the block that he used to sit on in Lodge, and at Council, which opened like Lodge always. Billy Fish said nothing, and no more did the others. 'Keep your hair on, Dan,' said I; 'and ask the girls. That's how it's done at Home, and these people are quite English.'

" 'The marriage of the King is a matter of State,' says Dan, in a white-hot rage, for he could feel, I hope, that he was going against

his better mind. He walked out of the Council-room, and the others sat still, looking at the ground.

" 'Billy Fish,' says I to the Chief of Bashkai, 'what's the difficulty here? A straight answer to a true friend,' 'You know,' says Billy Fish. 'How should a man tell you who know everything? How can daughters of men marry Gods or Devils? It's not proper.'

"I remembered something like that in the Bible;[2] but if, after seeing us as long as they had, they still believed we were Gods, it wasn't for me to undeceive them.

" 'A God can do anything,' says I. 'If the King is fond of a girl he'll not let her die.' 'She'll have to,' said Billy Fish. 'There are all sorts of Gods and Devils in these mountains, and now and again a girl marries one of them and isn't seen any more. Besides, you two know the Mark cut in the stone. Only the Gods know that. We thought you were men till you showed the sign of the Master.'

"I wished then that we had explained about the loss of the genuine secrets of a Master-Mason at the first go-off; but I said nothing. All that night there was a blowing of horns in a little dark temple half-way down the hill, and I heard a girl crying fit to die. One of the priests told us that she was being prepared to marry the King.

" 'I'll have no nonsense of that kind,' says Dan. 'I don't want to interfere with your customs, but I'll take my own wife.' 'The girl's a little bit afraid,' says the priest. 'She thinks she's going to die, and they are a-heartening of her up down in the temple.'

" 'Hearten her very tender, then,' says Dravot, 'or I'll hearten you with the butt of a gun so that you'll never want to be heartened again.' He licked his lips, did Dan, and stayed up walking about more than half the night, thinking of the wife that he was going to get in the morning. I wasn't any means comfortable, for I knew that dealings with a woman in foreign parts, though you was a crowned King twenty times over, could not but be risky. I got up very early in the morning while Dravot was asleep, and I saw the priests talking together in whispers, and the Chiefs talking together too, and they looked at me out of the corners of their eyes.

" 'What is up, Fish?' I says to the Bashkai man, who was wrapped up in his furs and looking splendid to behold.

" 'I can't rightly say,' says he; 'but if you can induce the King to drop all this nonsense about marriage, you'll be doing him and me and yourself a great service.'

" 'That I do believe,' says I. 'But sure, you know, Billy, as well as me, having fought against and for us, that the King and me are nothing more than two of the finest men that God Almighty ever made. Nothing more, I do assure you.'

" 'That may be,' says Billy Fish, 'and yet I should be sorry if it was.' He sinks his head upon his great fur cloak for a minute and thinks. 'King,' says he, 'be you man or God or Devil, I'll stick by you to-day. I have twenty of my men with me, and they will follow me. We'll go to Bashkai until the storm blows over.'

"A little snow had fallen in the night, and everything was white except the greasy fat clouds that blew down and down from the north. Dravot came out with his crown on his head, swinging his arms and stamping his feet, and looking more pleased than Punch.[3]

" 'For the last time, drop it, Dan,' says I, in a whisper. 'Billy Fish here says that there will be a row.'

" 'A row among my people!' says Dravot. 'Not much. Peachey, you're a fool not to get a wife too. Where's the girl?' says he, with a voice as loud as the braying of a jackass. 'Call up all the Chiefs and priests, and let the Emperor see if his wife suits him.'

"There was no need to call any one. They were all there leaning on their guns and spears round the clearing in the centre of the pine wood. A deputation of priests went down to the little temple to bring up the girl, and the horns blew up fit to wake the dead. Billy Fish saunters round and gets as close to Daniel as he could, and behind him stood his twenty men with matchlocks. Not a man of them under six feet. I was next to Dravot, and behind me was twenty men of the regular Army. Up comes the girl, and a strapping wench she was, covered with silver and turquoises, but white as death, and looking back every minute at the priests.

" 'She'll do,' said Dan, looking her over. 'What's to be afraid of, lass? Come and kiss me.' He puts his arm round her. She shuts her eyes, gives a bit of a squeak, and down goes her face in the side of Dan's flaming red beard.

" 'The slut's bitten me!' says he, clapping his hand to his neck, and, sure enough, his hand was red with blood. Billy Fish and two of his matchlock-men catches hold of Dan by the shoulders and drags him into the Bashkai lot, while the priests howl in their lingo, —'Neither God nor Devil, but a man!' I was all taken aback, for a priest cut at me in front, and the Army behind began firing into the Bashkai men.

" 'God A-mighty!' says Dan. 'What is the meaning o' this?'

" 'Come back! Come away!' says Billy Fish. 'Ruin and Mutiny is the matter. We'll break for Bashkai if we can.'

"I tried to give some sort of orders to my men—the men o' the regular Army—but it was no use, so I fired into the brown of 'em with an English Martini and drilled three beggars in a line. The valley was full of shouting, howling creatures, and every soul was shrieking, 'Not a God nor a Devil, but only a man!' The Bashkai troops stuck to Billy Fish all they were worth, but their matchlocks wasn't half as good as the Kabul breech-loaders, and four of them dropped. Dan was bellowing like a bull, for he was very wrathy; and Billy Fish had a hard job to prevent him running out at the crowd.

" 'We can't stand,' says Billy Fish. 'Make a run for it down the valley! The whole place is against us.' The matchlock-men ran, and we went down the valley in spite of Dravot's protestations. He was swearing horribly and crying out that he was a King. The priests rolled great stones on us, and the regular Army fired hard, and there wasn't more than six men, not counting Dan, Billy Fish, and Me, that came down to the bottom of the valley alive.

"Then they stopped firing and the horns in the temple blew again. 'Come away—for Gord's sake come away!' says Billy Fish. 'They'll send runners out to all the villages before ever we get to Bashkai. I can protect you there, but I can't do anything now.'

"My own notion is that Dan began to go mad in his head from that hour. He stared up and down like a stuck pig. Then he was all for walking back alone and killing the priests with his bare hands; which he could have done. 'An Emperor am I,' says Daniel, 'and next year I shall be a Knight of the Queen.'

" 'All right, Dan,' says I; 'but come along now while there's time.'

" 'It's your fault,' says he, 'for not looking after your Army better. There was mutiny in the midst and you didn't know—you damned engine-driving, plate-laying, missionary's-pass-hunting hound!' He sat upon a rock and called me every foul name he could lay tongue to. I was too heart-sick to care, though it was all his foolishness that brought the smash.

" 'I'm sorry, Dan,' says I, 'but there's no accounting for natives. This business is our Fifty-Seven.[4] Maybe we'll make something out of it yet, when we've got to Bashkai.'

" 'Let's get to Bashkai, then,' says Dan, 'and, by God, when I come back here again I'll sweep the valley so there isn't a bug in a blanket left!'

"We walked all that day, and all that night Dan was stumping up and down on the snow, chewing his beard and muttering to himself.

" 'There's no hope o' getting clear,' said Billy Fish. 'The priests will have sent runners to the villages to say that you are only men. Why didn't you stick on as Gods till things was more settled? I'm a dead man,' says Billy Fish, and he throws himself down on the snow and begins to pray to his Gods.

"Next morning we was in a cruel bad country—all up and down, no level ground at all, and no food either. The six Bashkai men looked at Billy Fish hungry-wise as if they wanted to ask something, but they said never a word. At noon we came to the top of a flat mountain all covered with snow, and when we climbed up into it, behold, there was an Army in position waiting in the middle!

" 'The runners have been very quick,' says Billy Fish, with a little bit of a laugh. 'They are waiting for us.'

"Three or four men began to fire from the enemy's side, and a chance shot took Daniel in the calf of the leg. That brought him to

his senses. He looks across the snow at the Army, and sees the rifles that we had brought into the country.

" 'We're done for,' says he. 'They are Englishmen, these people,—and it's my blasted nonsense that has brought you to this. Get back, Billy Fish, and take your men away; you've done what you could, and now cut for it. Carnehan,' says he, 'shake hands with me and go along with Billy. Maybe they won't kill you. I'll go and meet 'em alone. It's me that did it. Me, the King!'

" 'Go!' says I. 'Go to Hell, Dan. I'm with you here. Billy Fish, you clear out, and we two will meet those folk.'

" 'I'm a Chief,' says Billy Fish, quite quiet. 'I stay with you. My men can go.'

"The Bashkai fellows didn't wait for a second word, but ran off, and Dan and me and Billy Fish walked across to where the drums were drumming and the horns were horning. It was cold—awful cold. I've got that cold in the back of my head now. There's a lump of it there."

The punkah-coolies[5] had gone to sleep. Two kerosene lamps were blazing in the office, and the perspiration poured down my face and splashed on the blotter as I leaned forward. Carnehan was shivering, and I feared that his mind might go. I wiped my face, took a fresh grip of the piteously mangled hands, and said: "What happened after that?"

The momentary shift of my eyes had broken the clear current.

"What was you pleased to say?" whined Carnehan. "They took them without any sound. Not a little whisper all along the snow, not though the King knocked down the first man that set hand on him—not though old Peachey fired his last cartridge into the brown of 'em. Not a single solitary sound did those swines make. They just closed up tight, and I tell you their furs stunk. There was a man called Billy Fish, a good friend of us all, and they cut his throat, Sir, then and there, like a pig; and the King kicks up the bloody snow and says: —'We've had a dashed fine run for our money. What's coming next?' But Peachey, Peachey Taliaferro, I tell you, Sir, in confidence as betwixt two friends, he lost his head, Sir. No, he didn't neither. The

King lost his head, so he did, all along o' one of those cunning rope-bridges. Kindly let me have the paper-cutter, Sir. It tilted this way. They marched him a mile across that snow to a rope-bridge over a ravine with a river at the bottom. You may have seen such. They prodded him behind like an ox. 'Damn your eyes!' says the King. 'D'you suppose I can't die like a gentleman?' He turns to Peachey—Peachey that was crying like a child. 'I've brought you to this, Peachey,' says he. 'Brought you out of your happy life to be killed in Kafiristan, where you was late Commander-in-Chief of the Emperor's forces. Say you forgive me, Peachey.' 'I do,' says Peachey. 'Fully and freely do I forgive you, Dan.' 'Shake hands, Peachey,' says he. 'I'm going now.' Out he goes, looking neither right nor left, and when he was plumb in the middle of those dizzy dancing ropes, 'Cut, you beggars,' he shouts; and they cut, and old Dan fell, turning round and round and round twenty thousand miles, for he took half an hour to fall till he struck the water, and I could see his body caught on a rock with the gold crown close beside.

"But do you know what they did to Peachey between two pine trees? They crucified him, Sir, as Peachey's hand will show. They used wooden pegs for his hands and his feet; and he didn't die. He hung there and screamed, and they took him down next day, and said it was a miracle that he wasn't dead. They took him down—poor old Peachey that hadn't done them any harm—that hadn't done them any . . ."

He rocked to and fro and wept bitterly, wiping his eyes with the back of his scarred hands and moaning like a child for some ten minutes.

"They was cruel enough to feed him up in the temple, because they said he was more of a God than old Daniel that was a man. Then they turned him out on the snow, and told him to go home, and Peachey came home in about a year, begging along the roads quite safe; for Daniel Dravot he walked before and said:—'Come along, Peachey. It's a big thing we're doing.' The mountains they danced at night, and the mountains they tried to fall on Peachey's head, but Dan he held up his hand, and Peachey came along bent

double. He never let go of Dan's hand, and he never let go of Dan's head. They gave it to him as a present in the temple, to remind him not to come again, and though the crown was pure gold, and Peachey was starving, never would Peachey sell the same. You knew Dravot, Sir! You knew Right Worshipful Brother Dravot! Look at him now!"

He fumbled in the mass of rags round his bent waist; brought out a black horsehair bag embroidered with silver thread; and shook therefrom on to my table—the dried, withered head of Daniel Dravot! The morning sun that had long been paling the lamps struck the red beard and blind, sunken eyes; struck, too, a heavy circlet of gold studded with raw turquoises, that Carnehan placed tenderly on the battered temples.

"You behold now," said Carnehan, "the Emperor in his habit as he lived[6]—the King of Kafiristan with his crown upon his head. Poor old Daniel that was a monarch once!"

I shuddered, for, in spite of defacements manifold, I recognized the head of the man of Marwar Junction. Carnehan rose to go. I attempted to stop him. He was not fit to walk abroad. "Let me take away the whiskey, and give me a little money," he gasped. "I was a King once. I'll go to the Deputy Commissioner and ask to set in the Poorhouse till I get my health. No, thank you, I can't wait till you get a carriage for me. I've urgent private affairs—in the south—at Marwar."

He shambled out of the office and departed in the direction of the Deputy Commissioner's house. That day at noon I had occasion to go down the blinding hot Mall, and I saw a crooked man crawling along the white dust of the roadside, his hat in his hand, quavering dolorously after the fashion of street-singers at Home. There was not a soul in sight, and he was out of all possible earshot of the houses. And he sang through his nose, turning his head from right to left:

"The Son of Man goes forth to war,
A golden crown to gain;

His blood-red banner streams afar—
Who follows in his train?”[7]

I waited to hear no more, but put the poor wretch into my carriage and drove him off to the nearest missionary for eventual transfer to the Asylum. He repeated the hymn twice while he was with me, whom he did not in the least recognize, and I left him singing it to the missionary.

Two days later I inquired after his welfare of the Superintendent of the Asylum.

“He was admitted suffering from sunstroke. He died early yesterday morning,” said the Superintendent. “Is it true that he was half an hour bareheaded in the sun at midday?”

“Yes,” said I, “but do you happen to know if he had anything upon him by any chance when he died?”

“Not to my knowledge,” said the Superintendent.

And there the matter rests.

1888

Endnotes

- Note 1: Kipling based his story on the true-life exploits of an American adventurer, Josiah Harlan, who awarded himself the title of prince after occupying a region in the Hindu Kush in the late 1830s.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Meant to suggest the principles of Freemasonry, a secret fraternal society that developed from the masons’ guild in medieval Britain. By Victorian times it had grown to a prominent organization, whose members were bound to help each other in times of distress. Kipling was a member.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Right to inherit.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: These, and the other places mentioned at the beginning of the story, are in northern India.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: A European in India with no official attachment or position.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, the unfinished side of a wall.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Needed. "Annas": there are sixteen annas in a rupee, the basic monetary unit of India.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: On credit.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: This fictitious newspaper appears to be based on the Allahabad *Pioneer*, for which Kipling worked as a roving correspondent. The Central India States were quasi-independent "Native States," as they were also known, presided over by Indian royalty.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: British political officers appointed to oversee affairs at the courts of Indian rulers.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Fashionable man.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Catch on, understand.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: This phrase and the following one are from the code of the Freemasons.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Honestly.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Fashionable four-wheeled carriages.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Tall tales.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The caliph of Baghdad (763–809), who figures in many tales of the *Arabian Nights.*Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, residents: British government officials.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Fraudulently extorted money from. "Foregathered": met.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Female missionaries doing work among Indian women, who were customarily confined to a part of the house called the "Zenana."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Large swinging fan, usually worked by hand.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Major road connecting Calcutta and Delhi.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Places under British control. William Ewart Gladstone (1809–1898), leader of the Liberal Party from 1868 to 1875 and 1880 to 1894, and four times prime minister; he strongly opposed overseas expansion. “Brimstone”: that is, fire and brimstone, the supposed torments of hell.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In British legend the shield of King Arthur’s traitorous nephew was blank because he had done no deeds of valor.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Official outposts in the northern hills, to which many British people in India would retire during the hottest months.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: “God Knows Town”; that is, Nowheresville.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The final preparations were made for printing the newspaper.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A title meant to recall the Freemason connection.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A drink.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A reference to Sir James Brooke (1803–1868), “the White Rajah of Sarawak,” who, in return for helping the rajah of Sarawak, in Borneo, put down a rebellion, succeeded him after his death, and established a dynasty.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A real place, in the Hindu Kush.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Peshawar, a large city in present-day Pakistan.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In the Second Afghan War (1878–80), a force under the command of General Frederick Roberts made a three-hundred-mile forced march through the area.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A river whose sources are in the area.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Place or building for the accommodation of travelers and their pack animals.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Pinwheel.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The ruler of Afghanistan, based in the city of Kabul.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Person from Uzbekistan.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: The Khyber or Khaiber Pass, running thirty-three miles through the mountains. Then on the northwest frontier of British India, it now links Afghanistan and Pakistan.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Turkey.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Become sore.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Czar of Russia.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Presence (an honorary form of address).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Get ready.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Rifle issued to British infantry.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The principal tribe in Afghanistan.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: His Highness.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Non-Muslims.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A game in which a player guesses the number of objects that another player is holding.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: There was a legend that Alexander the Great had left a Greek colony in the area in the 4th century B.C.E.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Paltry, insignificant.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Knickknacks.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: God's command to Adam and Eve (Genesis 1:28).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, a kid goat, a fake religious ritual.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Primitive muskets.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A hunting term, meaning to fire into the middle of a group of game birds rather than aiming at a particular one.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In Jesus's parable of the talents, a nobleman gives each of his servants a coin to invest with those instructions (Luke 19:13).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Legendary Assyrian queen.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Worthless.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Freemasonry.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: The Bolan Pass, which was brought under British control in 1879 during the Second Afghan War.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Freemason handshake.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Railway truck.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Gathering.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In Freemasonry an official Lodge meeting, in which all members have a part.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Count off.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Afghan muskets.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Of the twelve original Hebrew tribes mentioned in the Bible, ten were lost by assimilating with neighboring peoples.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Infant.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Head of the British administration in India. Rajah Brooke: see p. 929, n. 3.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Older rifles being replaced by Martinis.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Layer of railway track.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: "Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings" (Proverbs 31:3).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: "That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose" (Genesis 6:2).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Common expression: the character in the Punch-and-Judy puppet show has a fixed grin and is delighted with his evil deeds.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The year 1857 saw the beginning of a two-year rebellion of Indian troops of the British East India Company and peasantry against the British; known at the time as the "Indian Mutiny," this is now referred to as the First War of Indian Independence.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Servants who operate punkahs, or fans.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Allusion to Hamlet's description of his father's ghost: "My father, in his habit as he lived" (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

3.4.126).Return to reference 6

- Note 7: A well-known hymn, by Reginald Heber (1783–1826), corrected in later editions to the actual words of the first line: “The Son of God goes forth to war.”Return to reference 7

Danny Deever

"What are the bugles blowin' for?" said Files-on-Parade.[1]
"To turn you out, to turn you out," the Colour-Sergeant[2] said.
"What makes you look so white, so white?" said Files-on-Parade.
"I'm dreadin' what I've got to watch," the Colour-Sergeant said.
For they're hangin' Danny Deever, you can hear the Dead March play,
The regiment's in 'ollow square[3]—they're hangin' him today;
They've taken of his buttons off an' cut his stripes[4] away,
An they're hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'.

"What makes the rear rank breathe so 'ard?" said Files-on-Parade.
"It's bitter cold, it's bitter cold," the Colour-Sergeant said.
"What makes that front-rank man fall down?" said Files-on-Parade.
"A touch o' sun, a touch o' sun," the Colour-Sergeant said.
They are hangin' Danny Deever, they are marchin' of 'im round,
They 'ave 'alted Danny Deever by 'is coffin on the ground;
An' 'e'll swing in 'arf a minute for a sneakin' shootin' hound—
O they're hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'!

" 'Is cot was right-'and cot to mine," said Files-on-Parade.
" 'E's sleepin' out an' far tonight," the Colour-Sergeant said.
"I've drunk 'is beer a score o' times," said Files-on-Parade.
" 'E's drinkin bitter beer[5] alone," the Colour-Sergeant said.
They are hangin' Danny Deever, you must mark 'im to 'is place,
For 'e shot a comrade sleepin'—you must look 'im in the face;
Nine 'undred of 'is county[6] an' the Regiment's disgrace,
While they're hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'.

"What's that so black agin the sun?" said Files-on-Parade.
"It's Danny fightin' 'ard for life," the Colour-Sergeant said.
"What's that that whimpers over'ead?" said Files-on-Parade.
"It's Danny's soul that's passin' now," the Colour-Sergeant said.
For they're done with Danny Deever, you can 'ear the quickstep play,
The regiment's in column, an' they're marchin' us away;
Ho! the young recruits are shakin', an' they'll want their beer today,

After hangin’ Danny Deever in the mornin’.

1890

Endnotes

- Note 1: Army private. “Files” here should be spoken as two syllables (*fy-ulls*).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: High-ranking noncommissioned officer.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Ceremonial formation in which the troops line four sides of a parade square, facing inward. “ ’Ollow”: hollow. London Cockney speech often drops the *h* from words that start with this letter.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Chevrons denoting rank, worn by corporals and sergeants on the sleeves of their tunics.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Or simply “bitter,” a favorite variety of beer drunk in English pubs. The word *bitter* thus becomes a grim pun.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: English regiments often bear the name of a particular county from which most of its members have been recruited (for example, the Lancashire Fusiliers).Return to reference 6

The Widow at Windsor

'Ave you 'eard o' the Widow at Windsor
  With a hairy[1] gold crown on 'er 'ead?
She 'as ships on the foam—she 'as millions at 'ome,
  An' she pays us poor beggars in red.[2]
    (Ow, poor beggars in red!)
There's 'er nick[3] on the cavalry 'orses,
  There's 'er mark[4] on the medical stores—
An' 'er troopers° you'll find with a fair wind be'ind
  That takes us to various wars.
    (Poor beggars!—barbarious wars!)
      Then 'ere's to the Widow at Windsor,
        An' 'ere's to the stores an' the guns,
      The men an' the 'orses what makes up the forces
          O' Missis Victorier's sons.
      (Poor beggars! Victorier's sons!)

Walk wide o' the Widow at Windsor,
  For 'alf o' Creation she owns:
We 'ave bought 'er the same with the sword an' the flame,
  An' we've salted it down with our bones.
    (Poor beggars!—it's blue with our bones!)
Hands off o' the sons o' the widow,
  Hands off o' the goods in 'er shop,
For the kings must come down an' the emperors frown
  When the Widow at Windsor says "Stop!"
    (Poor beggars!—we're sent to say "Stop!")
      Then 'ere's to the Lodge o' the Widow,

From the Pole to the Tropics it runs—
To the Lodge that we tile with the rank an' the file,
An' open in form with the guns.[5]
(Poor beggars!—it's always they guns!)

We 'ave 'eard o' the Widow at Windsor,
It's safest to leave 'er alone:
For 'er sentries we stand by the sea an' the land
Wherever the bugles are blown.[6]
(Poor beggars!—an' don't we get blown!)
Take 'old o' the Wings o' the Mornin',[7]
An' flop round the earth till you're dead;
But you won't get away from the tune that they play
To the bloomin' old rag° over'ead.
(Poor beggars!—it's 'ot over'ead!)
Then 'ere's to the sons o' the Widow,
Wherever, 'owever they roam.
'Ere's all they desire, an' if they require
A speedy return to their 'ome.
(Poor beggars!—they'll never see 'ome!)

1892

Endnotes

- Note 1: Airy, lofty. London Cockney speech often drops the *h* from words that start with this letter and sometimes adds an *h* to the beginning of words that start with a vowel.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: British military uniforms were bright red.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A nick on one of their hoofs identified army horses as property of the Crown.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: The queen's mark: "V.R.I." (*Victoria Regina et Imperatrix*, "Victoria Queen and Empress").Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Here, as in "The Man Who Would Be King," Kipling employs terms and concepts from Freemasonry (see p. 923, n. 1). Victoria's "Lodge" (her Masonic branch, or district) traverses the globe ("From the Pole to the Tropics"); the soldiers patrol its perimeters (to "tile" is to guard the door of a Masonic lodge), and gunfire stands in for the Masons' formal opening ceremonies.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Allusion to "Pro Rege Nostro" (1892), a poem by W. E. Henley (1849–1903).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Psalms 139:9.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *troopships*Return to reference °
- °: *the flag*Return to reference °

Recessional[1]

1897

God of our fathers, known of old—
  Lord of our far-flung battle-line—
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold
  Dominion over palm and pine—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies—
The Captains and the Kings depart—
Still stands Thine ancient Sacrifice,
  An humble and a contrite heart.[2]
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

Far-called, our navies melt away—
  On dune and headland sinks the fire[3]—
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
  Is one with Nineveh and Tyre![4]
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
  Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe—
Such boasting as the Gentiles use
  Or lesser breeds without the Law[5]—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube° and iron shard[6]—
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
And guarding calls not Thee to guard—
For frantic boast and foolish word,
Thy mercy on Thy People, Lord!

1897 1897, 1899

Endnotes

- Note 1: A hymn sung as the clergy and choir leave a church in procession at the end of a service. Kipling's hymn was written on the occasion of the Jubilee celebrations honoring the sixtieth anniversary of Queen Victoria's reign, celebrations that had prompted a good deal of boasting in the press about the greatness of her empire. "Recessional" was first published in the London *Times*, and Kipling refused to accept any payment for its publication, then or later. After World War I the poem's refrain —"Lest we forget"—gained additional poignancy: it was employed as an epitaph on countless war memorials.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare with Psalms 51:17: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Bonfires were lit on high ground all over Britain on the night of the Jubilee.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Once capitals of great empires. The ruins of Nineveh, in Assyria, were discovered buried in desert sands by British archaeologists in the 1850s. Tyre, in Phoenicia, had dwindled into a small Lebanese town.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Compare with Romans 2:14: "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves."Return to reference 5

- Note 6: Compare with Psalms 20:7: “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.”Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *cannon, rifle*Return to reference °

The White Man's Burden[1]

Take up the White Man's burden—
  Send forth the best ye breed—
Go bind your sons to exile
  To serve your captives' need;
To wait in heavy harness,
  On fluttered folk and wild—
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
  Half-devil and half-child.

Take up the White Man's burden—
  In patience to abide,
To veil the threat of terror
  And check the show of pride;
By open speech and simple,
  An hundred times made plain,
To seek another's profit,
  And work another's gain.

Take up the White Man's burden—
  The savage wars of peace—
Fill full the mouth of Famine
  And bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest
  The end for others sought,
Watch Sloth and heathen Folly
  Bring all your hope to nought.

Take up the White Man's burden—
  No tawdry rule of kings,
But toil of serf and sweeper[2]—
  The tale of common things.

The ports ye shall not enter,
  The roads ye shall not tread,
Go make them with your living,
  And mark them with your dead.

Take up the White Man's burden—
  And reap his old reward:
The blame of those ye better,
  The hate of those ye guard—
The cry of hosts ye humour
  (Ah, slowly!) toward the light:—
'Why brought ye us from bondage,
Our loved Egyptian night?'[3]

Take up the White Man's burden—
  Ye dare not stoop to less—
Nor call too loud on Freedom
  To cloak your weariness;
By all ye cry or whisper,
  By all ye leave or do,
The silent, sullen peoples
  Shall weigh your Gods and you.

Take up the White Man's burden—
Have done with childish days—
The lightly proffered laurel,[4]
  The easy, ungrudged praise.
Comes now, to search your manhood
  Through all the thankless years,
Cold, edged with dear-bought wisdom,
  The judgment of your peers!

1899

Endnotes

- Note 1: This poem was conceived for Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1897, but Kipling abandoned it in favor of "Recessional." He returned to the poem when disagreements between Spain and the United States over Spanish colonial rule in Cuba and elsewhere sparked the Spanish-American War in 1898. In its revised form the poem reacts to resistance in the Philippines to the United States' assumption of colonial power.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Street sweeper, who in India would belong to the lowest caste.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Compare with Exodus 16:2–3. When the Israelites were hungry in the wilderness, they criticized Moses and Aaron for taking them from what they saw as the relative comfort of Egyptian slavery.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A symbol of military distinction in the triumphs celebrated by victorious Roman generals (later, Roman emperors wore a laurel crown as part of their official regalia).Return to reference 4

If—

If you can keep your head when all about you
  Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
  But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
  Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated don't give way to hating,
  And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream—and not make dreams your
  master;
  If you can think—and not make thoughts your
  aim,
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
  And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
  Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
  And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
  And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,[1]
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
  And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
  To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
  Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
  Or walk with Kings—nor° lose the common touch,

If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

1910

Endnotes

- Note 1: A game, played with coins, that combines skill (tossing a coin as close as possible to a fixed mark) and luck (flipping coins and keeping those that come up heads).Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *and not*Return to reference °

MOHANDAS GANDHI
1869–1948

It might seem strange to conclude a collection of Victorian literature with the work of one of the best-known and most important anti-colonial activists of modern times. Mohandas Gandhi is famous for leading massive nonviolent campaigns against British rule in India. As a result, Gandhi might seem to be "Victorian" only insofar as he is anti-Victorian. To some extent, this is precisely why we have chosen to include a sample from his early work: if this volume tells a story, Gandhi's work helps indicate what happened next—the dismantling of the British Empire. At the same time, Gandhi's relationship to Victorian literature and culture is more nuanced and complicated than such an account might suggest. He did not simply reject British or Victorian culture; particularly in *Hind Swaraj*, he explicitly identifies what he learned from it.

Hind Swaraj, or "Indian Home Rule," as Gandhi translated it, is an early statement explaining the theory behind his claims for Indian independence. Written in 1909 while Gandhi was traveling back from England to South Africa (where he spent his early career), it makes clear his reasons for wishing to reclaim India from the British. The problem he identifies with the Raj is not their military or governmental power, however, but instead what most Britons would call *modernization*: "India is being ground down not under the English heel," he writes, "but under that of modern civilisation. It is groaning under the monster's terrible weight." In making this claim,

Gandhi was explicitly agreeing with several British writers, some of whom he cites in the bibliography with which the essay concludes: John Ruskin, Robert Sherard, Edward Carpenter, William Morris, Annie Besant, and others. Like many of them, Gandhi critiqued what he called "machinery," here embodied in the railways, lawyers, doctors, and other nonspiritual solutions to what he regarded as spiritual problems. As he insists, "civilisation" is not identical to technological advancement; it is instead "that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and our passions." Rather than improving the nation, therefore, British "[r]ailways, lawyers and doctors have impoverished the country, so much so that, if we do not wake up in time, we shall be ruined." This is a claim with which several other writers in this volume would have agreed, though the country they saw being ruined was not India but England. However influenced *Hind Swaraj* may have been by European writers and thinkers, it is both a product of Indian thought and oriented toward an Indian audience. As Gandhi explained in the preface to the first English edition, for example, he wrote it in the form of a dialogue because "the Gujarati language readily lends itself to such treatment. . . . Had I written for English readers in the first instance, the subject would have been handled in a different manner."

Gandhi was born and raised in a Hindu family in western India. He was trained in the law at the Inner Temple, London. After two years of practice in India, he moved to South Africa to represent an Indian merchant in a lawsuit. He stayed for twenty-one years, working as a lawyer and as a political organizer and activist. Gandhi returned to India in 1915, a moment of heightened political tensions. The Rowlatt Acts, which allowed the Raj to imprison those suspected of sedition without trial; the Massacre of Amritsar, in which British-led soldiers wounded and killed hundreds of peaceful demonstrators; the enactment of martial law: all these events inflamed the nation. Despite some initial hesitation, by 1920, Gandhi was organizing national boycotts of British goods and institutions. His commitment

to nonviolence was profound: he repeatedly called off protests when violence broke out or used his own fasts as a powerful tool to quell political infighting.

Despite his best efforts to prevent it, the price of Indian independence in 1947 was Partition, the horrifyingly bloody separation of Hindus and Muslims into the nations of India and Pakistan. The boundaries the British drew between the two nations were highly arbitrary—as was the decision to separate the Indian subcontinent along religious lines. The effect was to reinforce antagonisms that might have been mitigated or even overcome, and that had, until recently, been relatively dormant. Even in the wake of this devastating event, however, Gandhi found ways to be politically effective: his fasts helped end rioting in Calcutta in 1947 and in Delhi in 1948. Throughout his life and work, his goal was spiritual renewal, tolerance, and justice. Gandhi was assassinated in 1948 on his way to an evening prayer meeting in Delhi.

From Hind Swaraj[1]

Endnotes

- Note 1: In Sanskrit, home- or self-rule. For Gandhi, it specifically referred to Indian independence from foreign rule.Return to reference 1

From *Chapter IX. The Condition of India*

RAILWAYS

***

EDITOR: Railways, lawyers and doctors have impoverished the country, so much so that, if we do not wake up in time, we shall be ruined.

READER: I do now, indeed, fear that we are not likely to agree at all. You are attacking the very institutions which we have hitherto considered to be good.

EDITOR: It is necessary to exercise patience. The true inwardness of the evils of civilisation you will understand with difficulty. Doctors assure us that a consumptive clings to life even when he is about to die. Consumption does not produce apparent hurt—it even produces a seductive colour about a patient's face, so as to induce the belief that all is well. Civilisation is such a disease, and we have to be very wary.

READER: Very well, then, I shall hear you on the railways.

EDITOR: It must be manifest to you that, but for the railways, the English could not have such a hold on India as they have. The railways, too, have spread the bubonic plague. Without them, masses could not move from place to place. They are the carriers of plague germs. Formerly we had natural segregation. Railways have also increased the frequency of famines,[2] because, owing to facility of means of locomotion, people sell out their grain, and it is sent to the dearest markets. People become careless, and so the pressure of famine increases. They accentuate the evil nature of man. Bad men fulfil their evil designs with greater rapidity. The holy places of India have become unholy. Formerly, people went to these places with very great difficulty. Generally, therefore, only the real devotees visited such places. Now a days, rogues visit them in order to practise their roguery.

READER: You have given a one-sided account. Good men can visit these places as well as bad men. Why do they not take the fullest advantage of the railways?

EDITOR: Good travels at a snail's pace—it can, therefore, have little to do with the railways. Those who want to do good are not selfish, they are not in a hurry, they know that to impregnate people with good requires a long time. But evil has wings. To build a house takes time. Its destruction takes none. So the railways can become a distributing agency for the evil only. It may be a debatable matter whether railways spread famines, but it is beyond dispute that they propagate evil.

READER: Be that as it may, all the disadvantages of railways are more than counterbalanced by the fact that it is due to them that we see in India the new spirit of nationalism.

EDITOR: I hold this to be a mistake. The English have taught us that we were not one nation before, and that it will require centuries before we become one nation. This is without foundation. We were one nation before they came to India.[3] One thought inspired us. Our mode of life was the same. It was because we were one nation that they were able to establish one kingdom. Subsequently they divided us.

READER: This requires an explanation.

EDITOR: I do not wish to suggest that because we were one nation we had no differences, but it is submitted that our leading men travelled throughout India either on foot or in bullock-carts. They learned one another's languages, and there was no aloofness between them. What do you think could have been the intention of those far-seeing ancestors of ours who established Shevethindu Rameshwar in the South, Juggernaut in the South-East, and Hardwar[4] in the North as places of pilgrimage? You will admit they were no fools. They knew that worship of God could have been performed just as well at home. They taught us that those whose hearts were aglow with righteousness had the Ganges in their own homes. But they saw that India was one undivided land so made by nature. They, therefore, argued that it must be one nation. Arguing

thus, they established holy places in various parts of India, and fired the people with an idea of nationality in a manner unknown in other parts of the world. Any two Indians are one as no two Englishmen are. Only you and I and others who consider ourselves civilised and superior persons imagine that we are many nations. It was after the advent of railways that we began to believe in distinctions, and you are at liberty now to say that it is through the railways that we are beginning to abolish those distinctions. An opium-eater may argue the advantage of opium-eating from the fact that he began to understand the evil of the opium habit after having eaten it. I would ask you to consider well what I have said on the railways.

***

Endnotes

- Note 2: Both contemporary observers and recent historians agree with this assessment.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The British often claimed to have welded the many confederacies, sultanates, and empires of the Indian subcontinent into a single entity. Here, Gandhi is claiming that an Indian identity existed well before the incursions of the British East India Company.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A city on the banks of the Ganges, also a site of pilgrimage and worship; “Shevethindu Rameshwar”: a holy place to Hindus in India, site of the Char Dham pilgrimage; “Juggernaut”: the Anglicized name of one of the trinity of supreme deities in Hinduism with a temple located in the southeastern state of Odisha.Return to reference 4

From *Chapter XVII. Passive Resistance*

READER: Is there any historical evidence as to the success of what you have called soul-force or truth-force? No instance seems to have happened of any nation having risen through soul-force. I still think that the evildoers will not cease doing evil without physical punishment.

EDITOR: The poet Tulsidas[1] has said "Of religion, pity or love is the root, as egotism of the body. Therefore, we should not abandon pity so long as we are alive." This appears to me to be a scientific truth. I believe in it as much as I believe in two and two being four. The force of love is the same as the force of the soul or truth. We have evidence of its working at every step. The universe would disappear without the existence of that force. But you ask for historical evidence. It is, therefore, necessary to know what history means. The Gujarati[2] equivalent means: "It so happened." If that is the meaning of history, it is possible to give copious evidence. But, if it means the doings of kings and emperors, there can be no evidence of soul-force or passive resistance in such history. You cannot expect silver-ore in a tin-mine. History, as we know it, is a record of the wars of the world, and so there is a proverb among Englishmen that a nation which has no history, that is, no wars, is a happy nation. How kings played how they became enemies of one another and how they murdered one another is found accurately recorded in history, and, if this were all that had happened in the world it would have been ended long ago. If the story of the universe had commenced with wars, not a man would have been found alive to-day. Those people who have been warred against have disappeared, as, for instance, the natives, of Australia, of whom hardly a man was left alive by the intruders.[3] Mark, please, that these natives did not use soul-force in self-defence, and it does not require much foresight to know that the Australians will share the same fate as their victims. "Those that wield the sword shall perish by the sword." With us, the proverb is that professional swimmers will find a watery grave.

The fact that there are so many men still alive in the world shows that it is based not on the force of arms but on the force of truth or love. Therefore, the greatest and most unimpeachable evidence of the success of this force is to be found in the fact that, in spite of the wars of the world, it still lives on.

Thousands, indeed tens of thousands, depend for their existence on a very active working of this force. Little quarrels of millions of families in their daily lives disappear before the exercise of this force. Hundreds of nations live in peace. History does not, and cannot, take note of this fact. History is really a record of every interruption of the even working of the force of love or of the soul. Two brothers quarrel; one of them repents and reawakens the love that was lying dormant in him; the two again begin to live in peace; nobody takes note of this. But, if the two brothers, through the intervention of solicitors or some other reason, take up arms or go to law—which is another form of the exhibition of brute-force,—their doings would be immediately noticed in the press, they would be the talk of their neighbours, and would probably go down to history. And what is true of families and communities is true of nations. There is no reason to believe that there is one law for families, and another for nations. History, then, is a record of an interruption of the course of nature. Soul-force, being natural, is not noted in history.

READER: According to what you say, it is plain that instances of the kind of passive resistance are not to be found in history. It is necessary to understand this passive resistance more fully. It will be better, therefore, if you enlarge upon it.

EDITOR: Passive resistance is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms. When I refuse to do a thing that is repugnant to my conscience, I use soul-force. For instance, the government of the day has passed a law which is applicable to me. I do not like it. If, by using violence, I force the government to repeal the law, I am employing what may be termed body-force. If I do not obey the law, and accept the penalty for its breach, I use soul-force. It involves sacrifice of self.

Everybody admits that sacrifice of self is infinitely superior to sacrifice of others. Moreover, if this kind of force is used in a cause that is unjust, only the person using it suffers. He does not make others suffer for his mistakes. Men have before now done many things which were subsequently found to have been wrong. No man can claim to be absolutely in the right, or that a particular thing is wrong, because he thinks so, but it is wrong for him so long as that is his deliberate judgment. It is, therefore, meet that he should not do that which he knows to be wrong, and suffer the consequence whatever it may be. This is the key to the use of soul-force.

READER: You would then disregard laws—this is rank disloyalty. We have always been considered a law-abiding nation, you seem to be going even beyond the extremists. They say that we must obey the laws that have been passed, but that, if the laws be bad, we must drive out the law-givers even by force.

EDITOR:—Whether I go beyond them or whether I do not is a matter of no consequence to either of us. We simply want to find out what is right, and to act accordingly. The real meaning of the statement that we are a law-abiding nation is that we are passive resisters. When we do not like certain laws, we do not break the heads of law-givers, but we suffer and do not submit to the laws. That we should obey laws whether good or bad is a new-fangled notion. There was no such thing in former days. The people disregarded those laws they did not like, and suffered the penalties for their breach. It is contrary to our manhood, if we obey laws repugnant to our conscience. Such teaching is opposed to religion, and means slavery. If the government were to ask us to go about without any clothing, should we do so? If I were a passive resister, I would say to them that I would have nothing to do with their law. But we have so forgotten ourselves and become so compliant, that we do not mind any degrading law.

A man who has realised his manhood, who fears only God, will fear no-one else. Manmade laws are not necessarily binding on him. Even the government do not expect any such thing from us. They do not say: "You must do such and such a thing," but they say: "If you

do not do it, we will punish you." We are sunk so low, that we fancy that it is our duty and our religion to do what the law lays down. If man will only realise that it is unmanly to obey laws that are unjust, no man's tyranny will enslave him. This is the key to self-rule or home-rule.

It is a superstition and an ungodly thing to believe that an act of a majority binds a minority. Many examples can be given in which acts of majorities will be found to have been wrong, and those of minorities to have been right. All reforms owe their origin to the initiation of minorities in opposition to majorities. If among a band of robbers, a knowledge of robbing is obligatory, is a pious man to accept the obligation? So long as the superstition that men should obey unjust laws exists, so long will their slavery exist. And a passive resister alone can remove such a superstition.

To use brute-force, to use gun-powder is contrary to passive resistance, for it means that we want our opponent to do by force that which we desire but he does not. And, if such a use of force is justifiable, surely he is entitled to do likewise by us. And so we should never come to an agreement. We may simply fancy, like the blind horse moving in a circle round a mill, that we are making progress. Those who believe that they are not bound to obey laws which are repugnant to their conscience have only the remedy of passive resistance open to them. Any other must lead to disaster.

READER: From what you say, I deduce that passive resistance is a splendid weapon of the weak; but that, when they are strong, they may take up arms.

EDITOR: This is gross ignorance. Passive resistance, that is, soul-force, is matchless. It is superior to the force of arms. How then, can it be considered only a weapon of the weak? Physical-force men are strangers to the courage that is requisite in a passive resister. Do you believe that a coward can ever disobey a law that he dislikes? Extremists are considered to be advocates of brute force. Why do they, then, talk about obeying-laws? I do not blame them. They can say nothing else. When they succeed in driving out the English, and they themselves become governors, they will want you and me to

obey their laws. And that is a fitting thing for their constitution. But a passive resister will say he will not obey a law that is against his conscience, even though he may be blown to pieces at the mouth of a cannon.[4]

What do you think? Wherein is courage required—in blowing others to pieces from behind a cannon or with a smiling face to approach a cannon and to be blown to pieces? Who is the true warrior—he who keeps death always as a bosom-friend or he who controls the death of others? Believe me that a man devoid of courage and manhood can never be a passive resister.

This, however, I will admit: that even a man weak in body is capable of offering this resistance. One man can offer it just as well as millions. Both men and women can indulge in it. It does not require the training of an army; it needs no Jiu-jitsu.[5] Control over the mind is alone necessary, and, when that is attained, man is free like the king of the forest, and his very glance withers the enemy.

Passive resistance is an all-sided sword; it can be used anyhow; it blesses him who uses it and him against whom it is used. Without drawing a drop of blood, it produces far-reaching results. It never rusts, and cannot be stolen. Competition between passive resisters does not exhaust. The sword of passive resistance does not require a scabbard. It is strange indeed that you should consider such a weapon to be a weapon merely of the weak.

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Endnotes

- Note 1: Rambola Dobey (1554–1623), also known as Goswami Tulsidas, a Hindu saint and poet.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The language spoken by the Gujarati people of Gujarat, an Indian state, and Gandhi's native tongue.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Gandhi is referencing the British genocide of the Indigenous people of Australia. The ravaging effects of European diseases were supplemented by systematic massacres of the local population. It is estimated that by 1920 a population of a quarter million had been reduced to 60,000.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The British suppressed the Indian Rebellion of 1857 with this method.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Japanese martial arts in which combat is conducted with minimal if any weapons.Return to reference 5

From *Chapter XIX. Machinery*

READER: When you speak of driving out Western civilisation, I suppose you will also say that we want no machinery.

EDITOR: By raising this question you have opened the wound I had received. When I read Mr. Dutt's Economic History of India,[1] I wept; and, as I think of it again my heart sickens. It is machinery that has impoverished India. It is difficult to measure the harm that Manchester[2] has done to us. It is due to Manchester that Indian handicraft has all but disappeared.

But I make a mistake. How can Manchester be blamed? We wore Manchester cloth, and that is why Manchester wove it. I was delighted when I read about the bravery of Bengal.[3] There are no cloth-mills in that Presidency. They were, therefore, able to restore the original hand-weaving occupation. It is true, Bengal encourages the mill-industry of Bombay. If Bengal had proclaimed a boycott of *all* machine-made goods, it would have been much better.

Machinery has begun to desolate Europe. Ruination is now knocking at the English gates. Machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilisation; it represents a great sin.

The workers in the mills of Bombay have become slaves. The condition of the women working in the mills is shocking. When there were no mills, these women were not starving. If the machinery craze grows in our country, it will become an unhappy land. It may be considered a heresy, but I am bound to say that it were better for us to send money to Manchester and to use flimsy Manchester cloth, than to multiply mills in India. By using Manchester cloth, we would only waste our money, but, by reproducing Manchester in India, we shall keep our money at the price of our blood, because our very moral being will be sapped, and I call in support of my statement the very mill-hands as witnesses. And those who have amassed wealth out of factories are not likely to be better than other rich men. It would be folly to assume that an Indian Rockefeller[4] would be better than the American Rockefeller. Impoverished India can

become free, but it will be hard for an India made rich through immorality to regain its freedom. I fear we will have to admit that moneyed men support British rule; their interest is bound up with its stability. Money renders a man helpless. The other thing is as harmful is sexual vice. Both are poison. A snakebite is a lesser poison than these two, because the former merely destroys the body, but the latter destroy body, mind and soul. We need not, therefore, be pleased with the prospect of the growth of the mill-industry.

READER: Are the mills, then, to be closed down?

EDITOR: That is difficult. It is no easy task to do away with a thing that is established. We, therefore, say that the non-beginning of a thing is supreme wisdom. We cannot condemn mill-owners; we can but pity them. It would be too much to expect them to give up their mills, but we may implore them not to increase them. If they would be good, they would gradually contract their business. They can establish in thousands of households the ancient and sacred handlooms, and they can buy out the cloth that may be thus woven. Whether the mill-owners do this or not, people can cease to use machine-made goods.

READER: You have so far spoken about machine-made cloth, but there are innumerable machine-made things. We have either to import them or to introduce machinery into our country.

EDITOR: Indeed, our gods even are made in Germany. What need, then, to speak of matches, pins and glassware?[5] My answer can be only one. What did India do before these articles were introduced? Precisely the same should be done to-day. As long as we cannot make pins without machinery, so long will we do without them. The tinsel splendour of glassware we will have nothing to do with, and we will make wicks, as of old, with home-grown cotton, and use hand-made earthen saucers for lamps. So doing, we shall save our eyes and money, and will support Swadeshi, and so shall we attain Home Rule.

It is not to be conceived that all men will do all these things at one time, or that some men will give up all machine-made things at

once. But, if the thought is sound, we will always find out what we can give up, and will gradually cease to use this. What a few may do, others will copy, and the movement will grow like the cocoanut of the mathematical problem. What the leaders do, the populace will gladly follow. The matter is neither complicated nor difficult. You and I shall not wait until we can carry others with us. Those will be the losers who will not do it; and those who will not do it, although they appreciate the truth, will deserve to be called cowards.

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1909

Endnotes

- Note 1: Romesh Chunder Dutt (1848–1909) was an Indian civil servant and national leader; his *Economic History of India* argued that both the East India Company and the Raj discouraged Indian manufacture for their own financial and developmental gain.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Center of British industrial textile manufacturing throughout the 19th century.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Lord Curzon and other members of the Bengal presidency partitioned Bengal in 1905, separating the majority-Muslim East from the majority-Hindu West. Political unrest, including boycotts of British goods, surged from 1906 to 1909; the authorities reversed the decision in 1911.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: John D. Rockefeller (1839–1937), business magnate who dominated the oil industry of the early 20th century through his monopoly corporation, Standard Oil.Return to reference 4
- Note 5:
  Each of these items was used as a key example of technological progress in an important work of political theory. While John

Locke described reason as natural—like light—he described matches, or the cause of light, as the product of human invention. Adam Smith depicted the benefits of specialization by claiming that ten workers could make 48,000 pins a day were they to be employed in differentiated tasks. John Ruskin pointed to the uniformity of glass beads as an index of British technological advancement (although he condemned this advancement in "The Savageness of Gothic Architecture," see p. 476, above).
Return to reference 5